



IRON KAT DIY WEBSITE CHECKLIST



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Table of Contents

<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose and Register a Domain Name	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create a Launch Plan	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose Your CMS (Content Management System)	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose a Web Hosting Platform	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set Up Website (Through Web Host)	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create Launch Share Images	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Optimize Images	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Design Mobile Layout + Menu	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Design Desktop Layout	7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add Content/Pages to Your Website	8
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add Info Pages Like Sales, Pricing, or Menu	8
<input type="checkbox"/>	Design Your Blog	9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create/Write 3 Blog Posts	9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add Quality Images to Your Pages & Blog Posts	9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name Your Pages and Add SEO Descriptions	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for Broken Links	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create Lead Magnet for Email List (if Applicable)	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test Contact Form & Mailing List Integrations	11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test Other Integrations	11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Link Google Analytics and Google Search Console	12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit a Launch Request	12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Using Wordpress? Don't Forget Your Plugins	13
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test for Usability	14



Excited to build your own website? Whether you want to create a website for yourself or your business, you can do that by using the right tools and resources.

This step-by-step guide will help you create a website from scratch.

Choose and Register a Domain Name

In order to create your website, the very first thing you'll need is a domain name.

The domain name is your website name and address. That address is used by visitors when they try to find your site through their web browsers.

Domain names can cost anywhere from \$10 to \$50 a year. The usual price tag is around \$15 or under.

If you haven't registered or chosen a domain name for your website, here are some tips to help you out:

- If you're making a website for a business, your domain name should match your company name. For example:
YourCompanyName.com
- If you're planning to set up a personal website for yourself then **YourName.com** can be a great option.
- Try to stick to a "generic" domain name extension such as .com, .net or .org if your goal is international visitors. Use a "local" domain name extension such as .de, .fr, or .ru if your goal is country-targeted visitors.

Don't worry if your preferred domain name is already taken. There are millions of different domain names registered, but there are a billion other possibilities that are still available.



Create a Launch Plan

The schedule should be created with everyone involved with the new website.

If you've hired a copywriter or photographer to help with content, be sure that you connect them with your web designer (if you hire one). This ensures that everyone understands their responsibilities, what they need to provide and when it's due.

Write these things down so everyone's clear on what was agreed upon, but remember to be flexible if certain things take longer than expected.

When creating your launch schedule, work backwards from the launch date. You'll want to make sure that you include these things in your launch schedule:

- Reaching out to people who will help you promote your new site.
- Set time aside for testing and feedback.
- Soft launch (to further test that everything works).
- Giveaway/promotion start/end dates.
- Content/social schedule (social media, email blasts, etc.)

Choose Your CMS (Content Management System)

Once you have your domain name, you'll need to choose and install a website building platform (also known as CMS).

A CMS, or content management system, often allows you to design a website from a pre-created template, optimize your content for SEO, and edit content after it's published. If you've already built a website, you might have already gained experience with using a CMS.

But, if this is your first website, one way to make things easier is to utilize a CMS because it does a lot of the work for you.

We recommend choosing [Showit](#) since its UI (User Interface) is easy to use, but also very powerful and feature rich.

Alternatively, you can also test out other CMS platforms like WordPress or Squarespace.



Choose a Web Hosting Platform

In addition to having a domain, you'll also need web hosting. Some CMS like [Showit](#) include website hosting with their site builders.

Web hosting is a service that hosts and stores your website files (content) on a secure server that is always up and running. Without a web host, your site will not be accessible for others to read and browse.

There are many different hosts and platforms, so make sure you research and figure out which fits your needs.

Whichever web hosting company you sign up with, make sure you check for the following features:

- SSL (Secure Site Lock) Some hosts like Showit include this for free
- Custom email accounts
- Customer support, preferably a live chat option
- One-click-install for WordPress (if you decide on this CMS)

Set Up Website (Through Web Host)

Once you have your domain name and web hosting ready to go, you'll need to install your chosen CMS (website building platform).

If you choose Showit, great! Not only is it a powerful CMS, it's also a web host. It's easy to use and comes with many free and paid template designs that can easily be customized to make your website look professional and unique. [Read more about why I switched my own website to the Showit platform](#)

With Showit, setting up your website is easy because they do most of the work for you, so you don't really have to get your hands too dirty.

If you don't choose Showit as your CMS/web host, don't worry. Many good web hosting providers will provide documents or support to help you with the setup process.



Create Launch Share Images

While this isn't required to launch your site, it is nice to have social media graphics that highlight your website. It's especially important to have a few ready to go if you're asking someone else to share about your launch.

Optimize Images

One mistake we see a lot of people make is uploading full resolution images. You want your images to look good, but you aren't sure what size to make them, so you upload the original files and let your website size them down (hopefully it's one that does!)

The problem is that those image files are probably MUCH larger than they need to be. And if your images are so large that they do one of those slow loads from the top down, visitors may move on (or worse yet, click away) before they ever see that beautifully chosen image.

So what size images should you share?

To take into account retina devices (which need a larger file in order to appear crisp), we recommend:

[Width of images displayed on your website] x 1.5 = [size file you should upload]

If that's too confusing, a good general rule of thumb is to make images that don't span the full width of a page—about 1100 pixels wide. Just keep in mind that sizing all of your images to 1100 pixels will result in several images that are larger than they need to be (which in turn will slow down your site). If you're able, try to stick to the formula above. And if you have an image that needs to span the full width of a page, we recommend making it about 1800 pixels wide.



Design Mobile Layout + Menu

We know it's often conceptually easier for people to design the desktop first, but we put mobile design at the top of this list for a few reasons.

First—Most of your website traffic will probably come from mobile devices, so it's important to focus on delivering a great mobile experience.

And second—many people get through designing the desktop version of their website, and then get stuck or overwhelmed when designing the mobile versions. Consider designing the mobile version as you complete the desktop version of your website.

Be sure to keep a few of these things in mind as you design your mobile website:

- Limit your use of video
- Make sure that fonts are large enough to be easily read on small screens
- Make sure your menu is easy to click through
- Eliminate extra elements that make pages endlessly scroll

Design Desktop Layout

This is pretty self-explanatory, but you'll want to design your website for desktop viewing. Make sure you test the site at both larger sizes (large desktops) and smaller sizes (small laptops) to make sure that elements are not cut off or scrunched together.



Add Content/Pages to Your Website

Pages are the essence of your website. It's hard to imagine a website without any pages on it, right?

From a technical point of view, a web page is just a document on the web. It's not very different from your traditional Word document apart from it having your website's branding elements such as the header and footer.

Web pages are easy to create in Showit. But before we get into the how-to, let's discuss what pages you should create in the first place.

Most websites will find the following pages/sections essential:

- **Home:** it's the first page that your visitors see when they go to your website
- **About:** a page/section explaining what your website is about
- **Contact:** a page/section letting visitors contact you
- **Blog:** a listing of your most recent blog posts; if you're not planning on blogging, you can use the blog page as a place for your company news and announcements
- **Services:** if the website you're building is for a business, use this page/section to showcase your services
- **Shop or Store Page:** if you want to launch an eCommerce store

Add Info Pages Like Sales, Pricing, or Menu

Sure, you can email this kind of information in PDF form, but large PDFs can be difficult to load or open if your email is slow.

Showit makes it easy to include this kind of information on a hidden page or subdomain (plus site). This way you can send a link to leads instead of hoping they'll be able to open your PDF.



Design Your Blog

If you're starting with a template, the blog will most likely be built-in, but you may need to adjust a few of the elements to style menus, CTAs (call to actions) or links to categories.

Most blog designs include a main blog page that lists several of the latest posts and a single page for the full blog post. Some blog designs may use a different layout (or layouts) for category or search pages.

Create/Write 3 Blog Posts

You'll want to make sure that there's some content on your website when you launch. It's an opportunity to demonstrate your competence and add value for people on their first visit.

We recommend having at least three blog posts ready to go so that it gives your website a "fuller" look and it gives people additional content to consume.

These three posts should add a ton of value for people. It's your first impression, so make sure these posts are in-depth and well-done.

If not, it's likely people will spend little time on your website and probably won't return.

Add Quality Images to Your Pages & Blog Posts

When a page on your website is shared to social media, make sure it looks good!

If you're using Showit, you can control what image is shared by adding a **Share Image** within the dashboard. You can find this option right below the SEO tools.



Name Your Pages and Add SEO Descriptions

There's all sorts of stuff you'll want to do to optimize your website. One really easy thing you can do is use the tools Showit makes available to you. You can quickly add SEO titles and descriptions to the pages on your website. Just follow this quick tutorial: [View guide](#) »

If you go with another CMS, do a quick search on how to implement SEO on that platform.

Check for Broken Links

Our rule before launching: If it hasn't been tested, it doesn't work.

It can be tedious to test every link on your website. But it's better than the alternative: Visitors on your website not being able to access the content you're encouraging them to access.

We test every link before we publish a new website for the first time, and then we do it again after it's been published.

Have friends or family that wouldn't mind helping? Ask them to be another set of eyes and make sure your website looks good to go.

Create Lead Magnet for Email List (if Applicable)

One of the best ways to collect email addresses is through a lead magnet. A lead magnet is an incentive you provide in exchange for, in this case, someone's email address. It might be an ebook, guide, or ticket to a free webinar. Lead magnets are almost always free.

A lead magnet is an effective way to start building a relationship with a potential client.

If someone uses your contact form, they're probably ready to work with you. A lead magnet, however, is for those who might be interested in what you do, but not quite ready to contact you.

You can then use that email address to nurture that lead into a paying customer.



Test Contact Form & Mailing List Integrations

If you're looking for software to help you build your mailing list, there are many options out there. Some examples: Mailchimp, flodesk, and Convertkit. There are many others not named, so make sure to find something that fits your current needs. You can always upgrade as you grow.

Be sure to replace placeholder forms with your own form and test your integration before launching your website. You don't want to miss out on leads!

The same goes for your contact form. Be sure to test this before launching your website. It's good practice to test it once a week to make sure everything's up and running.

Test Other Integrations

Make a list of the other software solutions you're using on your website and be sure to test each of them thoroughly.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

If you intend on selling merchandise, shopping cart solutions often have "test" and "live" modes. Be sure to turn each product to "live" after testing. Otherwise, you'll be giving customers a big discount.



Link Google Analytics and Google Search Console

Google Analytics and Google Search Console are two of the best tools available for getting an idea of what's happening on your website.

The former will give you a bunch of insight into your website traffic from number of visitors to referrals sources to the path your visitors take while on your website. The latter will let you know whether Google is having trouble indexing your website, and can also provide insight into what searches your website is appearing.

Both tools are free.

Submit a Launch Request

If you ended up choosing Showit, their customer support sets them apart from many of the other website platforms out there.

If you're launching a new blog or migrating an old blog, the Showit customer support pros will take care of this for you. They will launch your site and either setup or migrate your blog for you.

All you need to do is go to your Site Settings to complete your request. Keep in mind that this could take up to 7 days to complete.

Other web hosts may have a different process or require you to do all the heavy lifting yourself. Make sure to do research on what will best fit your needs before committing to a host.



Using Wordpress? Don't Forget Your Plugins

Here are some recommend plugins:

Yoast Premium: Yoast is widely considered the best SEO tool for WordPress. There's both a free and paid version, but we recommend the paid version, which—among other things—comes with a nifty redirections tool. (This is automatically installed onto your Wordpress blog with Showit)

Redirections (if you don't get Yoast Premium): Redirections is an easy-to- use, free tool that makes it easy to create redirects.

Subtitles: It can be challenging to develop titles that aren't too long. The subtitles tool solves that problem. It's also free.

WP Smush: Optimize your images, turn on lazy load, resize, compress and improve your Google Page Speed. There's a free and paid version.

Wordfence: The Wordfence WordPress security plugin provides free enterprise-class WordPress security, protecting your website from hacks and malware. There's a free and paid version.

All-In-One WP Migration: This plugin exports your WordPress website including the database, media files, plugins and themes with no technical knowledge required. It's great for backups or migrating your site.

This plugin allows you to upload your site to a different location with a drag and drop in to WordPress.

A note about plugins: Plugins can slow down your website. We recommend deleting plugins that you are not using, and only using the plugins you really need.



Test for Usability

Once you complete the previous step and have a fluid navigation, your next step should be to test your site for usability.

While usability testing can be pretty broad, there are a few vital aspects that should be at the top of your list for this step:

- Is it readable?
- Does it work in various browsers?
- Does it work on mobile?
- Will users know what to do?
- Do all the links work?
- Does the contact form work?

If you can answer “yes” to these questions, then at least you’re on the right track. Keep polishing these elements until you’re ready to launch, and then keep tracking and polishing after that.

If the answer is no, then you need to go back to the drawing board and turn them into “yesses.” No exceptions.