

YOUR WEBSITE MUST-HAVES CHECKLIST

Your start-to-finish checklist for crafting a website that actually sells, attracts your ideal client, and makes your business shine.



SELFISH DESIGN CO.

MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

Welcome! I'm so glad you found your way to Selfish Design Co and selected this resource to guide you on your website journey.

Before you get started, I want to say how grateful I am that you're here. As a small business owner, your support is invaluable.

Prior to creating this resource, I searched for design-crafted templates that I could share with my clients and community members, but I couldn't find any I truly loved that put all the tips and tricks I use in one spot. Instead of waiting for someone else to create the checklist of my dreams, I got to work.

This checklist is unique in that it is written by a professional branding and website designer, meaning that the strategies and techniques used in our professional designs are the same ones you'll find here. Each item on this list has been meticulously researched, tested, and backed by data.

This template is easy to use and reference as you work through building your own website. Each of these tips that I recommend (and personally use) are inherently customizable. They are designed to enhance your unique voice and strategically boost your website to attract more clients.

If you have any questions or issues with this resource, please email me at selfishdesignco@gmail.com and we'll figure it out together.

I'm so glad you're here.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annika" followed by a stylized monogram or flourish.

OVERVIEW



This checklist includes:

- Ten tips for what to include in your website to make it more successful
- A detailed explanation of each tip with no jargon.

This checklist will help you:

- Bring in more digital foot traffic
- Convert passive visitors into active clients
- Make a lasting impression on visitors
- Connect you with your audience

THE CHECKLIST

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| 01 | IDENTIFY BRAND COLORS AND FONTS | DONE
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| 02 | IDENTIFY BRAND PHOTOS OR STOCK PHOTOS THAT FIT YOUR BRAND IMAGE | DONE
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| 03 | MAKE YOUR WHO, WHAT, AND WHY CLEAR | DONE
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| 04 | USE BUTTONS TO GUIDE VISITORS | DONE
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| 05 | ENSURE NAVIGATION BAR IS CLEAR AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD | DONE
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| 06 | ADD A CONTACT FORM | DONE
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| 07 | WRITE WEBSITE COPY THAT IS SEO-FRIENDLY | DONE
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| 08 | MAKE SURE YOUR WEBSITE IS VISUALLY DYNAMIC | DONE
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| 09 | LINK YOUR SOCIALS | DONE
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| 10 | IDENTIFY WHAT ACTION-ITEM YOU WANT VISITORS TO WALK AWAY WITH | DONE
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01 IDENTIFY BRAND COLORS AND FONTS

When someone visits your site, the first thing that they are taking in within the first 0.3 seconds is the visuals. And it's the thing that determines the difference between whether they stay or whether they leave. If your site isn't cohesive, that will be immediately communicated to your audience. First impressions matter and you don't get a second chance to make one, so make sure it counts.

Tips for selecting brand colors:

- Choose 4-5 colors, with two of those colors being white and black.
- Select 5 words to describe your brand and then consider colors that coordinate with those adjectives. For example, minimalistic could be white, black, or gray. Or, bold could be red, orange, or blue.

Tips for selecting brand fonts:

- Choose 2 fonts. One for the header and one for the body text.
 - You can use a more script-based font for headers or single words for expressive effect.
 - Fonts in the sans-serif family are great for body text because they're easy to read.

Just like with colors and fonts, photos can add visual dynamism and break up blocks of text on your site.

If you have brand photos, then you are all set. If you don't have brand photos, stock photos are a great substitute in the meantime (just make sure to check all licensing policies for stock photos before using).

Free stock photo sites:

- Unsplash
- Kaboom
- Pexels (includes stock videos)

Tips for selecting stock photos:

- Use the 5 adjectives describing your brand to help narrow down photos that are directly aligned with the image you want to put out into the world. If your brand is professional and sleek, maybe a photo of a cozy workspace isn't the best fit.
- Don't use any photos with identifiable faces.
- Mix up the types of photos you use. Don't make them all of a desk or all of plants. Keep it fresh and interesting.
- Try to use photos that are "action based" (e.g. someone writing vs. a pen sitting on paper)

It's important to understand these three fundamental questions in order to have a lasting impact on your audience. More importantly, knowing the answer to these three questions will make your site more interesting, your story more relatable, and your product/service/art more compelling.

- Who are you trying to reach (i.e. who is your ideal audience? If you could pick anyone to visit your site, who would they be? How old, where are they from, what do they care about, what are they passionate about?)
- What are you trying to communicate to them (i.e. what is the service you are offering, what are your creative goals, what is your mission statement)
- Why should they care (i.e. what value will it add to their lives, what problem will it help them solve?)

04 USE BUTTONS TO GUIDE VISITORS

It sounds so simple, but that's why it works. When people first come to your website, they have no idea how to navigate it. They don't know where anything is. Buttons guide your visitors to the pages that are most important for turning casual visitors into active clients (read: portfolio, service offer page, client booking page). In other words, buttons make it clear what your visitors should pay attention to.

Tips for using buttons:

- People like to know what they're getting themselves into. Make it clear what they can expect from the button. (E.g. "View Portfolio" or "Work with me").
- Have one at the top of your webpage in the navigation bar that leads to your services page, appointment booking page, or contact form.
- Use different styles of buttons (filled in versus just outlined, different colors from your brand color palette) to keep it dynamic.
- This goes without saying, but - make sure the links always work. Always.

Clear navigation at the top of your website will instantly familiarize a visitor with your website and help them see all there is to explore without having to dig through your site. The goal is to get people to come to your site and stay there. This happens when they are presented with information in an orderly manner that they can peruse at their own pace, not when they are presented with a mountain of info that they're not sure how to make sense of. People want to be directed when they come to your website; don't let them feel lost, guide them through your story. The joy of exploration is what we're going for here. Think of your navigation bar as the map.

Tips for clear navigation:

- Try to keep the number of links in the navigation bar to under 5 for orderliness.
- Have a link to the home page.
- Have a link to an about page.
- Have a link to a page for your services or client booking.
- Have a link to a page for your portfolio or previous client work.

We've all seen *Before Sunrise*, right? Guy and girl meet on a train, each heading to different destinations; guy and girl fall in love; guy and girl part ways without exchanging contact information. Wait, what? Exactly. In the world of dating, it's hard to forget someone that quickly, but sadly the internet isn't quite so fortunate. If people come to your site, fall in love, but then can't find a way to contact you or book an appointment with you, they will click away and likely never think of you again. Harsh, but true. You have got to have a way for interested visitors to get in touch with you, it's just that simple. Contact forms are the easiest version of this, but you can also utilize a newsletter function that will allow you to compile an email list.

Tips for contact forms:

- It has to be said: make sure at the bare minimum you receive their name and email.
- Make sure it's easy to fill out. You don't want to make people do too much heavy lifting at the beginning.
- Respond within 48 hours. Stay on top of it, be communicative.

Copy is all the words you see written on a website. Even the words you're reading right now are copy. When you're putting together your website, make sure that the words you're writing are digestible, demonstrate your unique voice, and make use of SEO. I know, I know. The dreaded SEO. But SEO doesn't have to be overly complicated. Consider who your ideal audience is (we did this in #3) and then consider what are the kinds of things they're Googling. Create a list of 5-10 keywords that relate to your ideal audience and then use them strategically throughout your site to boost your Google standing. For example, perhaps you offer photography services. What are the types of things that someone interested in booking a photographer would Google?

Tips for writing SEO-friendly copy:

- Platforms like Keywords Everywhere, Ahrefs, or SEOSpace can help you identify keywords that are frequently Googled.
- Consider starting a blog. Google loves content creators and ranks them higher over the long term.
- Consider starting with “long-tailed keywords” (keywords that are 4 or more words) to build a foundation & following, rather than going for the biggies like “photographer” right off the bat.

Consider an essay or article. If each sentence or paragraph started with the same structure, you would quickly lose interest. Changing up the words keeps a reader engaged. The same thing is true when designing a website or web page. In addition to consistent colors and fonts, as well as on-brand images, there are other ways to ensure your website is visually dynamic. Change up the way each page is set up. Don't have a page be all the same color. Break it up with blocks of color or blocks of images. One fun example would be to have your Instagram handle scrolling along the footer of your website. It makes the site more interesting to look at, keeps viewers invested, and ensures they keep scrolling. Websites are a way to express your unique individuality and creativity. Let it show!

Tips for creating a visually dynamic website:

- Be consistent, not repetitive.
- Remember what you look for in a website when you're perusing the internet. The people stumbling onto your website will be no different.
- Try adding photos to the background of text (pro tip: play with the photo's opacity to make sure the text is still legible)

This one goes without saying, but I'll go ahead and say it anyway because you wouldn't believe the amount of times I've seen people forget to do this. If someone finds their way to your website, you want to make it as easy as possible for them to stay in touch with you as possible. This means letting them know that you have a YouTube channel where you post your short films. It means letting them know you have a Pinterest where you pin mood boards for all your projects. People want to connect with art that resonates with them. Help them out, and help yourself out in the process too.

Tips for linking socials:

- Ensure they're located in both the header and footer of your website.
- Make sure the links work. Always, always.

Just as it's important to understand your ideal audience, it's important to know what you would like them to leave your site with. Eventually, they will click away from your site, so what is the takeaway you want them to leave with? Figure out what it is and structure your website around that action item.

Tips for identifying your action item:

- If your site visitor were to tell someone about your website, what would you want them to remember?
- If you could communicate only one thing through your site, if it only had one purpose - what would it be?
- Use all your buttons and navigation in service of this action item.

WANT MORE TIPS?

CHECK OUT MY BLOG FOR MORE FREE RESOURCES

