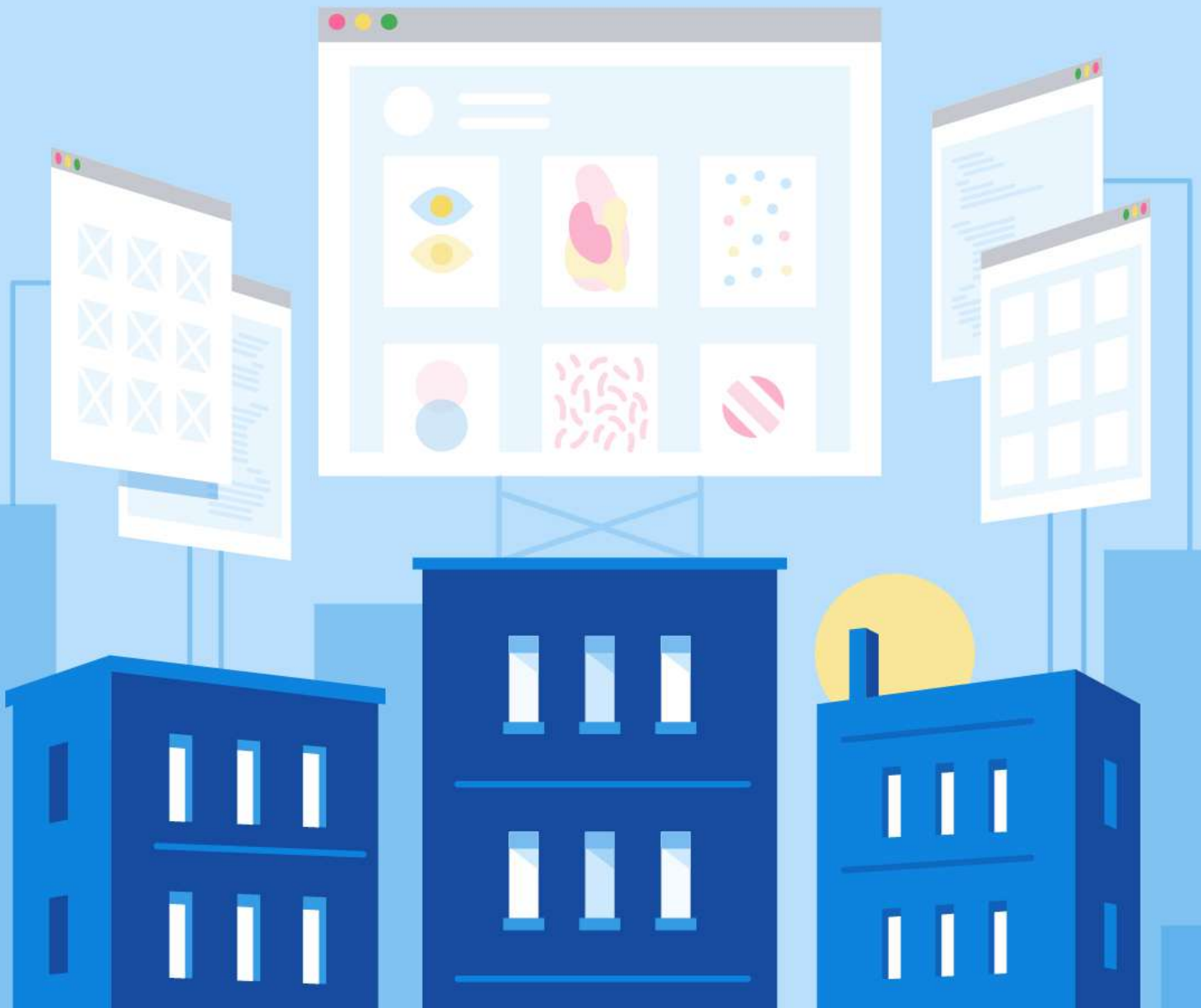


A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO

BUILDING A WEBSITE FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO

Building a Website for Your Small Business

By Heather Hudson for FreshBooks
Illustrated by Jesse Read



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INTRODUCTION

Why a Small Business Website Matters

If You Don't Have a Website, Your Business Doesn't Exist

It's a harsh but modern reality. In a world where most consumers Google a company before they even think of doing business with them, a website is a necessary part of running a successful small business.

No Website = Lost Sales

81% of Customers

Look Online Before Buying

Source: MineWhat.com

54% of Businesses

Have a Website

Source: Clutch.co

5 Reasons Your Small Business Needs a Website

1. BUILD TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

Many people don't consider your business legitimate if you can't be found online.

2. MAKE IT EASY FOR CUSTOMERS TO CHOOSE YOU

More than 80% of people research online before buying anything. If you're not there, you're not competing for their business.

3. MAKE IT SIMPLE FOR SATISFIED CUSTOMERS TO REFER YOU

Forget business cards—people trade in URLs when making referrals.

4. ADVERTISE 24/7

A website allows you to show your best work and reach people who would otherwise never hear of you.

5. SAVE TIME AND INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

Your website answers simple questions for your customers, allowing them to feel informed and you to invest your time in what matters: running your business.

Shouldn't I Just Hire a Professional?

In short, YES!

THERE ARE MANY SMART REASONS TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL. THEY'LL:

- Customize a design and user experience specifically for your business
- Manage the technical responsibilities
- Bring knowledge and experience about best practices and trends
- Manage the design and execution from start to finish



If you have the budget, hiring a professional to help you with your website is a great investment.

BUT NOT EVERY ENTREPRENEUR IS THERE YET

Don't wait: A basic site demonstrates that you're in business, have an online presence and provides a place to display your work.

BUT...BUILDING A WEBSITE IS BEYOND MY SKILLS, RIGHT?

Nope! You don't have to understand code, be an expert in graphic design or have experience writing stirring copy to put together a website that speaks to your ideal customers.

Let's Break This Down!

We're going to walk you through 12 steps to create a website from start to finish.

- Step 1** Persona Building: Who Are Your Customers?
- Step 2** Identify Your Business Value Proposition
- Step 3** Identify What Customers Want from Your Website
- Step 4** Choose & Register Your Domain Name
- Step 5** Choose a Content Management System (CMS)
- Step 6** Choose a Web Host
- Step 7** Identify & Organize Your Website Pages / Sitemap
- Step 8** Gather Your Design Elements
- Step 9** Choose Your Theme/Template
- Step 10** Write & Edit the Content for Your Website Pages
- Step 11** QA - Test Your Website
- Step 12** Launch!

CHAPTER 1

Identify the Purpose of Your Website

Step 1: Persona Building: Who Are Your Customers?

Mapping out what your customers want will help you design a website that speaks directly to their needs.

Use the chart below to create some “personas” of visitors / customers.



What does the user
hear?



What does the user
think & feel?



What does the user
say or do?



What does the user
see?



Pain
(fears, frustrations,
obstacles)



Gain
(wants, needs, measures
Of success)

“

There's a lot of research that suggests many start-ups fail because they don't take into account what their customers want, need and value. They're too focused on their products and services and not focused enough on what customers care about.



- VANESSA REMENTILLA,
Creative Director And Digital Strategist

Learn More: [Empathy: The Secret Ingredient to Business Success](#)

Step 2: Identify Your Business Value Proposition

Articulate what makes you different from your competitors. If your business could be known for only one thing, what would it be? Examples:





| VALUE | DESCRIPTION | Y/N |
|---------------------------|---|-----|
| Unique Approach | “No one does it like me!” | |
| Superior Customer Service | “I return calls in 10 minutes and have someone on the job within 2 hours” | |
| Extensive Experience | “I’ve been in the business for 10 years and teach master classes” | |
| Unbeatable Value | “My prices blow your competitors’ out of the water!” | |
| Other: | Insert Your Own: | |

Step 3: Identify What Customers Want from Your Website

Check all the reasons they might visit your website (feel free to add a few!):

| PURPOSE OF VISIT | DESCRIPTION | Y/N |
|--------------------|---|-----|
| Research | To find out what services you offer | |
| Research | To see samples of your work | |
| Pricing | To see how much you charge | |
| Contact | To book a meeting with you | |
| Contact | To find your contact information | |
| Trust / Legitimacy | To make sure you're a credible business | |
| Testimonials | To read testimonials/reviews of your work | |
| Other: | Insert Your Own: | |

End of Chapter Check-In Point

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CHAPTER 2

Choose and Register a Domain Name

Step 4: Choose & Register a Domain Name

Your internet domain name is essentially your website's address. When someone types your domain name into a web browser, they will be directed to your website.

5 TIPS TO HELP YOU CHOOSE A DOMAIN NAME

Make it easy for your ideal customers to visit your website by making your domain name simple to type, easy to understand and recognizable.

Make it easy to say out loud

YES: camsplumbingservices.com

NO: camosophyplumbing.com

Avoid complicated acronyms

YES: regalcleaningservices.com

NO: WYSIWYG.com

No-brainer: match your domain name to your business name

YES: Carlthecontractor.com

NO: carljonescares.com

Use keywords that relate to your business

YES: Torontofreelancewriter.com

NO: besteverythingwriter.com

Keep it short and simple

YES: abdulrashidphotos.com

NO: theverybestphotographyoucanhireever.com



“

Make your domain name brandable: Brandable, meaning when you hear the domain name, when you hear yourself or someone else say it, does it sound like a brand, or does it sound like a generic? So that means that hyphens and numbers are a real problem because they don't make something sound like a brand. They make it sound generic, or they make it sound strange.



– RAND FISHKIN, Moz

Learn More: [How to Choose a Domain Name](#)

FAQs on Domain Registration

Q: .COM, .ORG, .NET... WHICH EXTENSION SHOULD I REGISTER?

A: ALL OF THEM

When you settle on a domain name that fits your business, most web experts recommend registering it as a .com (if it's available), as well as other top-level domain extensions that apply to your type of business, including: .net .org .biz

You may also select a domain extension that relates to where you do business, such as: .ca (Canada) .au (Australia) .us (U.S.) .co.uk (United Kingdom)

Registering the domain name under multiple extensions prevents confusion among your competitors with the same names.

Q: WHAT IF .COM ISN'T AVAILABLE?

The original .com extension is still preferred by most businesses—even though web extensions are becoming less relevant as users tend to use search terms or simply Google the name of the business they're looking up. If it's important to you to have a .com address, you may have to be very creative when selecting a domain name.






Q: HOW MUCH DOES A DOMAIN REGISTRATION COST?

The cost of registering a domain name varies, but ranges from \$5 to \$20. Many companies include the cost as part of their hosting packages, but web hosts can also register your domain name even if they don't host your website.



Pro-Tip: Domains typically expire annually (though you can purchase longer terms from some companies). If you don't renew your domain name on time, another business can take it!

End of Chapter Check-In Point

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CHAPTER 3

Choose a Content Management System and Web Host

Step 5: Choosing a Content Management System (CMS)

Don't be scared! Yes, we're getting technical-sounding terms up there, but we'll work through this together, we promise. If we were building a house, this is the part where we would choose the foundation and hook up the utilities.

- The CMS is the computer application that allows publishing, editing, uploading, organizing and managing your content.
- CMSes range from the complex (you can code custom features into your website) to the simple (you're provided templates on which you upload your files).



Features to Consider When Choosing a CMS:

ALL-IN-ONE PACKAGE?

CMS options such as Squarespace offer all-in-one solutions, including domains, hosting, analytics and design templates. Responsive across all media. Your CMS should produce a website that's readable in all formats, including tablet, mobile phone, laptop and desktop computer.

EASY (FOR YOU) TO USE

You should be able to navigate, upload, edit and manage your content and images easily in the CMS interface. It's important to find one that's at your technical level.

TEMPLATES THAT ARE SUITED TO YOUR BUSINESS

Browse the design options available to be sure there are options that will optimally showcase your business. A photographer will likely choose a portfolio-style template while a home services business might be better served by a standard corporate look.

REASONABLE PRICE

Avoid paying for features and services you don't need and won't use. Simple CMS packages can be found for around \$10/month.



Pro-Tip: Our experts pushed at using anything besides Squarespace. Their belief is that nothing can touch it in terms of ease of use, quality and price.

Some Popular Options



SQUARESPACE

Most popular for its user-friendly design and eye-popping imagery, Squarespace is the leader of all-in-one website packages. If you're a creative professional (writing, photography, graphic design, art, etc.), Squarespace offers incredible templates that will help showcase your work. However, if you're looking for a simple design and want to include ecommerce, Squarespace may not be the best choice. Plan includes: Website template, domain, hosting and analytics.



WORDPRESS

Economical, easy to use and equipped with a huge number of themes to choose from, WordPress is an enormously popular CMS. (FreshBooks narrows it down with [19 Free WordPress Themes For Every Kind of Freelancer.](#)) With little technical knowledge, you can do just about anything. SEO is made simple and e-commerce is easy to add. But, WordPress is known for updating their software frequently, which means you need to be on top of that too. Plus, customizing themes can get costly and require finicky technical finesse. Plan includes: Website template, domain, hosting and analytics.



Designed for small businesses, online stores and artists, Wix boasts free pre-built layouts for several different industries. It allows you to move things around until it's "pixel perfect" and has functionality to add animated text and other elements. Wix can be a bit pricey compared to other CMSes and once you choose your initial template, you're locked into it. Plan includes: Website template, domain and Google Analytics integration.

Step 6: Choosing a Web Host

Unless you're comfortable hosting all of your website's files on your own server and managing their security, you'll need a web hosting service. (That is, if the CMS you chose does not provide this service.)



This process is kind of like linking your mobile phone to a service provider. You'll manage the look and feel and the way you use your website; your web hosting company will take make sure you have everything you need to keep your website live.

There are thousands of web hosting companies, ranging from the simple and free to the large and complex. You'll need to consider your website's needs and find the right fit for your business.

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Selecting a host is kind of a big deal, because everything from the speed and stability of your website, to its security and uptime can depend on making a good choice. And if you pick a host and set yourself up only to realize another host would be better for you, migrating your site can be a real pain in the neck.



– KEZZ BRACEY ([source](#))

Learn More: [The \(Seriously\) Comprehensive Guide to Choosing a Web Host](#)

Things to Consider When Choosing a Web Host

CHECK REVIEWS FOR SERVER RELIABILITY

Verify through several review sites that the web host provides stable service that doesn't crash regularly or have downtime.

BE SURE THEY OFFER SUFFICIENT STORAGE FOR YOUR FILES

Unless you're planning an interactive website, the base package is usually fine. You can always add on if your site increases in scope.

TEST THE CONNECTION SPEED

Visit a few sites hosted by the company and see how quickly they load. Remember that most people don't have the patience to wait more than a few seconds for a website to appear.

LOOK FOR FEATURES YOU NEED

You might want email addresses (Note: Make sure there isn't a limit on mailbox capacity, domain name registration and some back-end tools for your Content Management System—see Step 1).








EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

Do they provide 24-hour telephone or email technical support? This is crucial. Be wary of web hosts that provide a "support forum" in lieu of people who can answer your questions quickly.



Pro-Tip: Walk away if the renewal cost is substantially larger than the hosting sign-up fee.

End of Chapter Check-In Point

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CHAPTER 4

Identify & Organize Your Website Pages / Sitemap

Here's where your deep reflection and hard work from earlier comes back into play.

You'll remember that you identified your unique value proposition and the reasons your ideal customers are visiting your website. Now it's time to create a sitemap that gives your visitors the information they want—plus the information you want them to have.

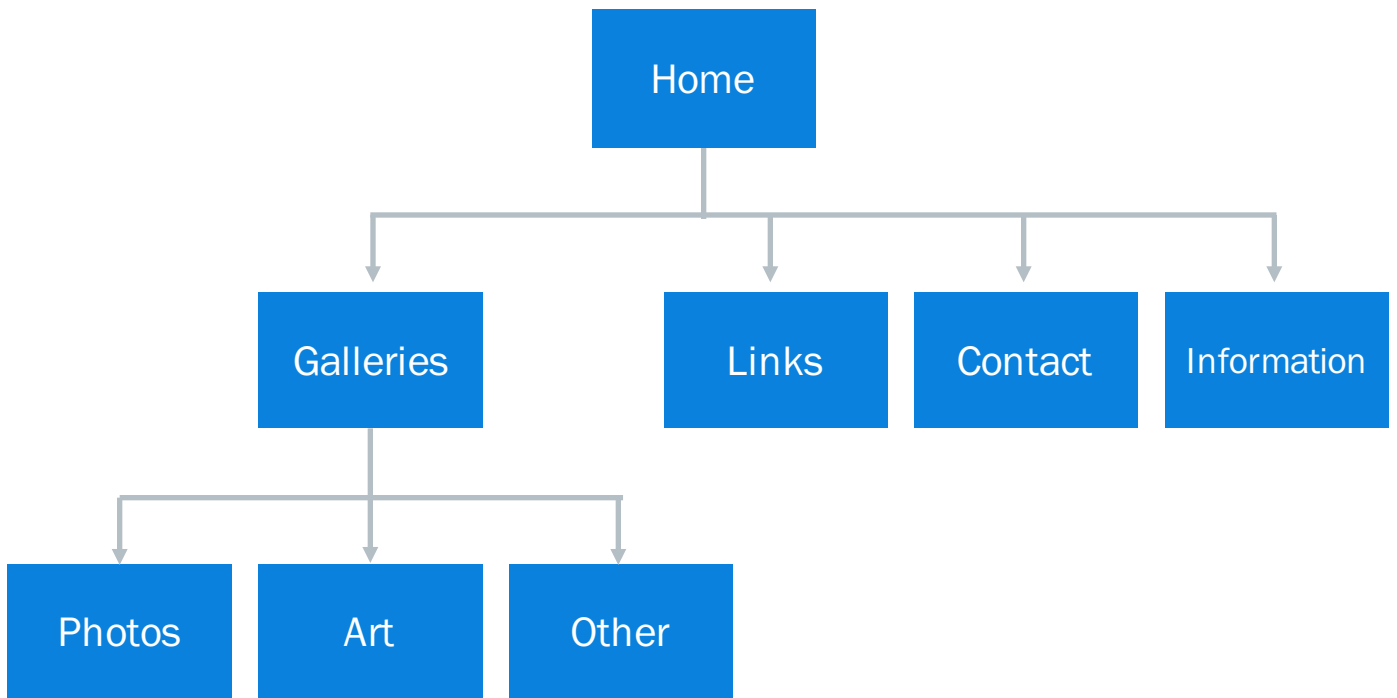
Step 7a: List Your Website Pages

Create a list of all the information you want to share—and then separate it into pages. Here are some main ones common to most sites:

| PAGE | PURPOSE | Y/N |
|--|--|-----|
| Home / Index Page | Welcome your visitors and share your unique value proposition. Share at least one photo—of yourself or your work | |
| About Us | Build trust and familiarity; share information about you and the vision of your business | |
| Services | Introduce your service offerings and link to sub-pages that offer the details about each one | |
| Case Studies/ Portfolio/ Past Work | Seeing is believing: show off your work with high-quality photographs, samples and short descriptions of the challenge and solution you used | |
| Pricing | You may choose to create a page dedicated to pricing You may choose not to include this information or simply write a paragraph explaining your pricing structure, if appropriate | |
| Contact Us | Arguably the most important page! Let your visitors know how to reach you: by phone, email and on social media If you take meetings at your office, include a map | |
| Blog | If you host a blog elsewhere, be sure to post a link on your website | |
| FAQs | If you find yourself answering the same 10 questions, create a page that answers them in a friendly question and answer format | |
| Terms & Conditions | | |
| 404 Page | | |

Step 7b: Organize Those Pages / Build a Sitemap

It's critical to look at it from your ideal customer's point of view. Why are they visiting the site? What do they want to know? What will make them contact you?



Pro-Tip: Spend some time on this exercise, thinking about the precise purpose and content that can live on each page. There's no point creating a page if it's not rich. Be ruthless and make sure every page has a compelling "reason to be".









“

Research tells us that before a [web] page even loads, users start scrolling. They're only on home page for 3-5 seconds and will usually click two or three times before they leave your website. They need to be in the conversion funnel, e.g. filling out a form, accessing your phone number or email on the second click.



– CANDACE VAN OOSTRUM, UX Strategist

End of Chapter Check-In Point

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Grow Your Business with FreshBooks

A great website is just one step to setting your small business up for success.

A good system for invoicing, tracking time and managing expenses is also key to your success.

That's why FreshBooks makes billing virtually painless.
Try it free today for 30 days.

Try It Today



CHAPTER 5

Gather Your Design Elements

Step 8a: Gather Your Design Elements

It goes without saying that you want your website to be a welcoming place for your visitors. It should be pleasing to the eye, easy to navigate and visually reflect the ethos of your brand.

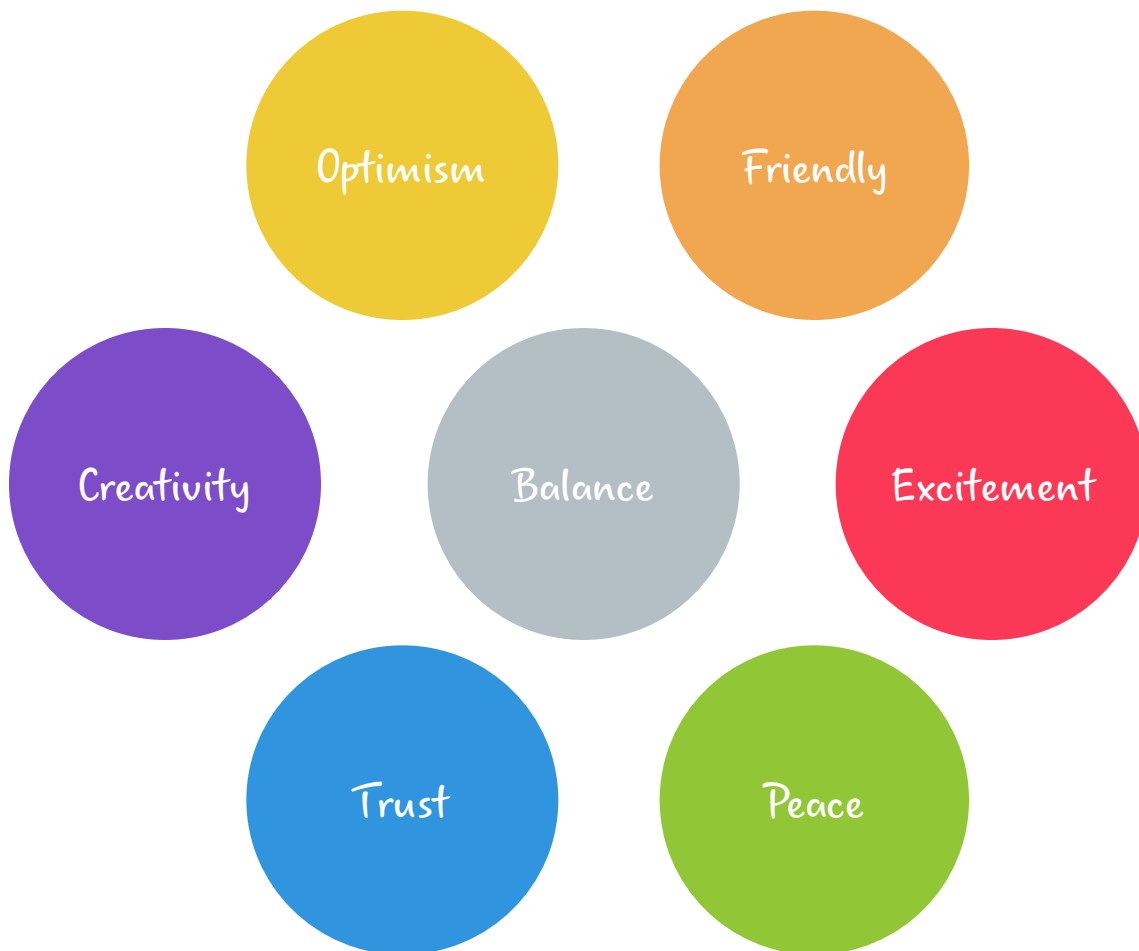
Unless you have a background in graphic design—or have hired a professional—our best advice is to keep it as clean and simple as possible. A classic look without a lot of flashing gimmicks is what most people prefer in a business website.



Pro-Tip: Even if you couldn't afford a developer and designer to work on your entire website, you can still get portions of design—work handled by a professional... your logo, your website photography etc. are all good places to lean on others, especially if those tasks are outside your skill set!

Choosing a Color Palette

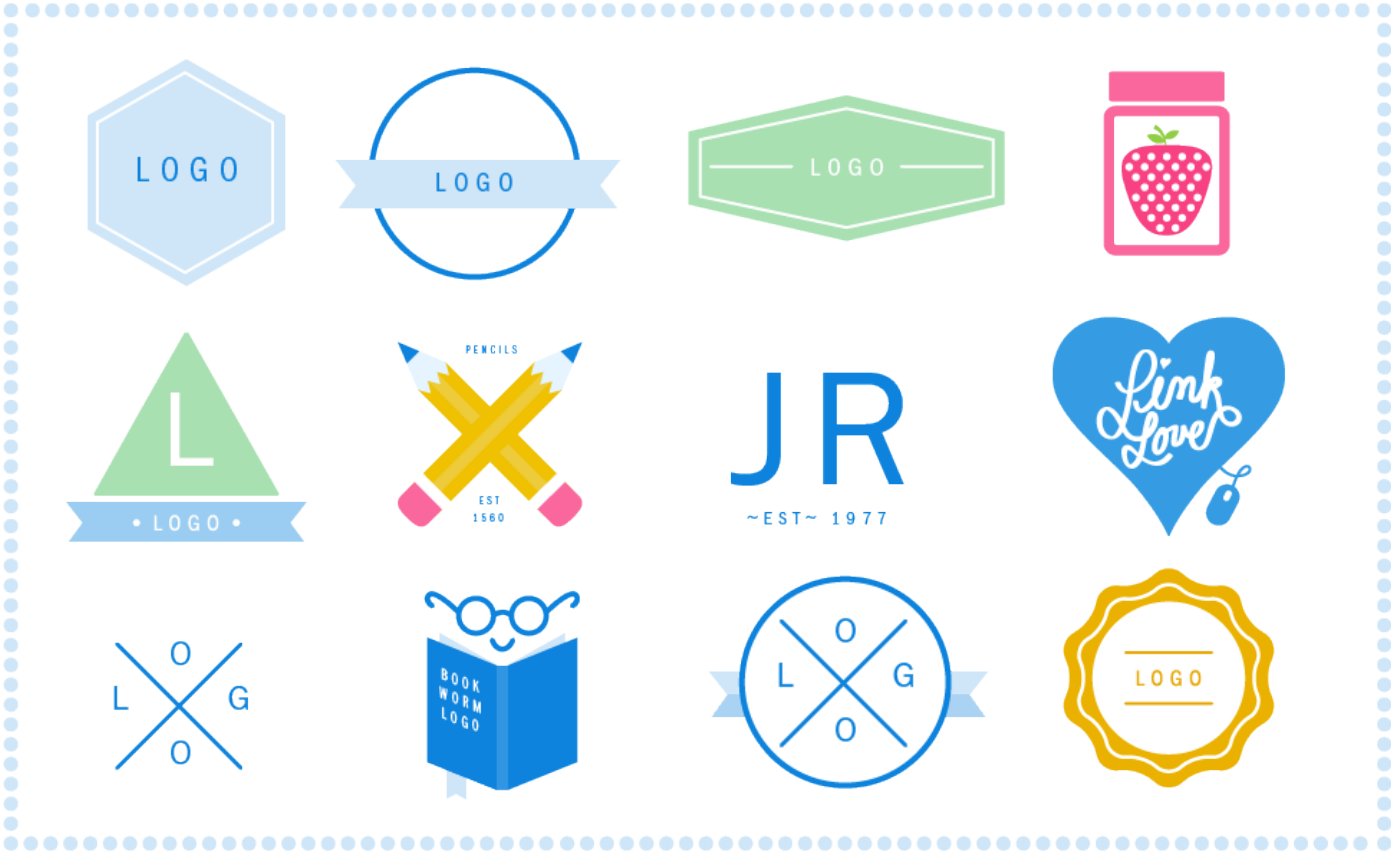
There's a lot of research available on the psychology of color. It can bring up emotions in buyers that affect their purchasing decisions and how they feel about a brand.



- When it comes to choosing a pop of color for your visual identity, you'll want to consider what shades best represent the type of image you want your business to project.
- Revisit your value proposition to help you narrow it down.

Your Small Business Logo

If your company doesn't have a logo, now is a great time to create one. You can hire a graphic designer to create one for you or take a look at [Easy to Use Logo Creator Tools for Freelancers and Small Business Owners](#).



When we think of logos, we often think of complex illustrations but often the best logos are extremely simple.

Tips on Font Choice

It's easy to get carried away with fonts. Our advice? Don't do it. You want your ideal customer to visit your site and not even notice the font. That means your words and message are what's shining through, not the lettering.

Aa Aa Aa

You can stick with classic fonts like Helvetica, Times New Roman or Palatino or shop around for trendier types:

- [The 10 Most Popular Sans-Serif Fonts](#)
- [The 41 Greatest Free Web Fonts](#)
- [The 200+ Best Modern Fonts Collection for 2017](#) (most are free)



Pro-tip: Maintain display consistency across all browsers by using web-based fonts on your website. Google Fonts has an extensive collection to match your vision and style, and can be easily embedded onto your website.

Images for Your Website

Images add interest to an otherwise classically-designed (read: simple) page. Like color, they help incite emotion in visitors. When it comes to selecting images for your website, choose carefully.

ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS

If you want to instill trust and familiarity with your visitors, be sure to post photographs of you and your team. You won't regret hiring a professional photographer to take high-quality head and group shots. (A wedding photo with your partner cropped out does more harm than good.)

If you take your own photographs of your work, be sure to use only high-resolution images. Anything fuzzy or out of focus looks unprofessional.

STOCK PHOTOS

If you're camera shy or your business doesn't lend itself to visuals, consider purchasing a few stock photographs to help give your web pages a visual lift.

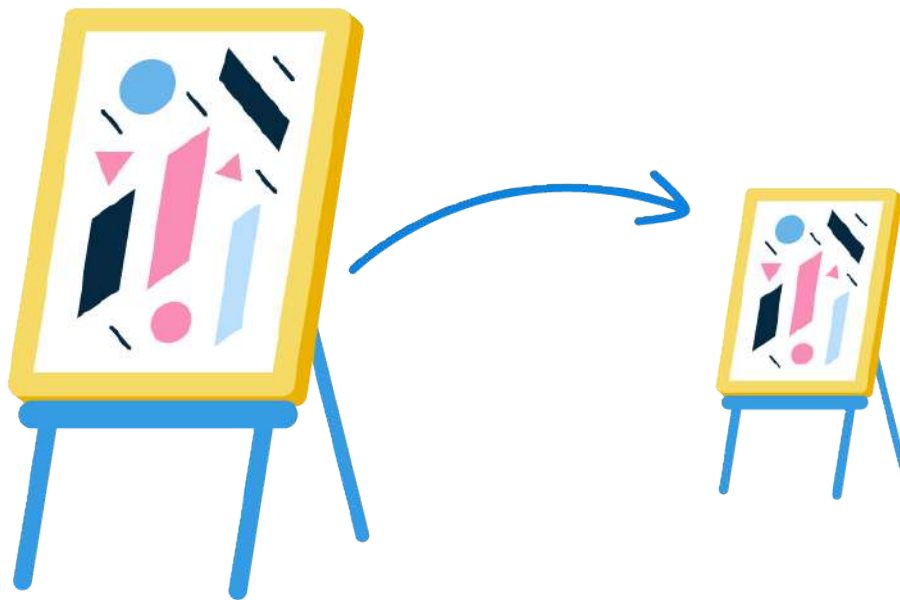
GRAPHICS

If you have a complex business offering, it's worth the investment to hire a graphic designer to create an infographic that visually explains it. If you want to use an image or infographic from another website, be sure to get permission and/or give credit with a link.

Learn More: [73 Websites to Find Amazing Royalty-Free Images](#)

Step 8b: Compress All Your Image Assets

Want to upload a bunch of PDF or JPG samples to your portfolio page? Great! Before you do, make sure you compress these files before adding them to your pages.



- If you don't, your pages will load slowly or improperly.
- In addition to changing the look of your website, it also prevents people from getting to your information.
- Another good reason to compress? Search engines assess page load times to create SEO rankings.
- Free File Compressors To Try
 - <https://tinypng.com/>
 - <http://www.ilovepdf.com>
 - <https://www.pdfcompress.com>
 - <http://pdfcompressor.com>
 - <https://smallpdf.com/>










“

A good rule for images is to size them to be twice as large as you want them, and then set the dimensions once uploaded to the site. For example, I would size my JPG or PNG to be 600 x 400 pixels. Then I would put it through an online compressor. Then once on the site, I would set it to 300 x 200 pixels. This makes sure you have high quality crisp images that don't slow down your site.



- BECKY STERN, Web Designer

End of Chapter Check-In Point

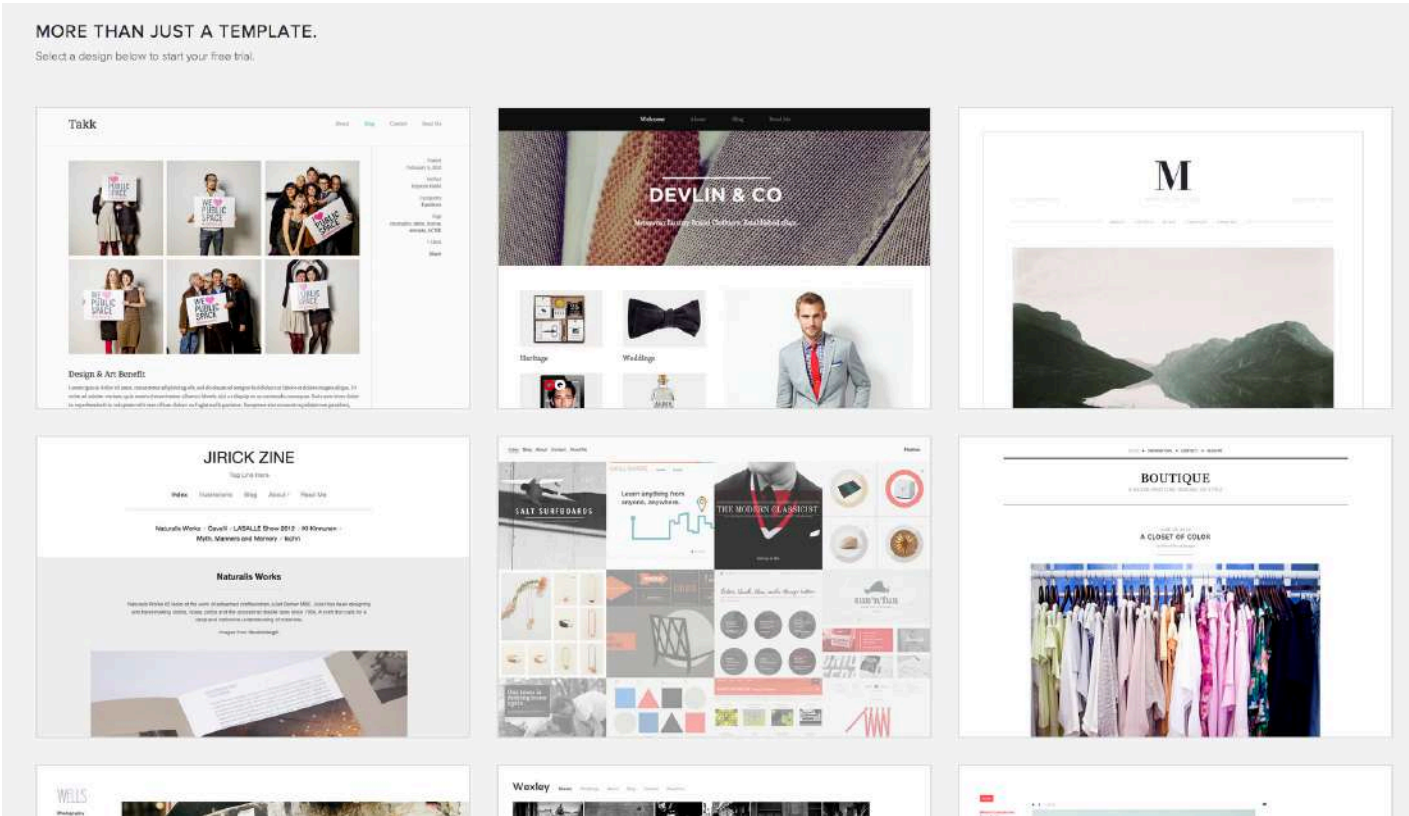
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CHAPTER 6

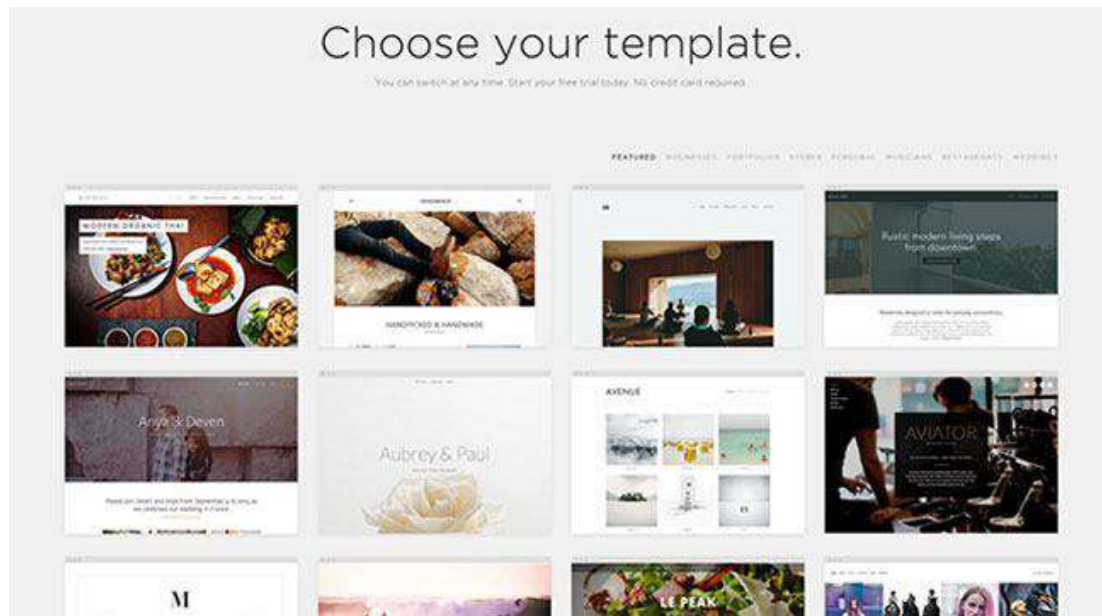
Choose Your Theme/Template

Step 9: Choose a Theme / Template

Most Content Management Systems (CMS) offer themes or templates on which you can build your website. It's kind of like choosing a template in a program like PowerPoint—you'll get a consistent look and feel with an assortment of page styles to choose from for individual pages.



8 Tips for Choosing a Theme



1. SIMPLICITY

If you're not comfortable fiddling around with widgets and coding, look for the themes that have the least amount of customization. There are many that just require you to plunk in your content and hit publish.

2. MOBILE READINESS

Your website needs to be easily viewed on all devices. Want to check whether a theme works across all devices? Plug in the URL of the theme's demo page into Google's Mobile Friendly Test page.

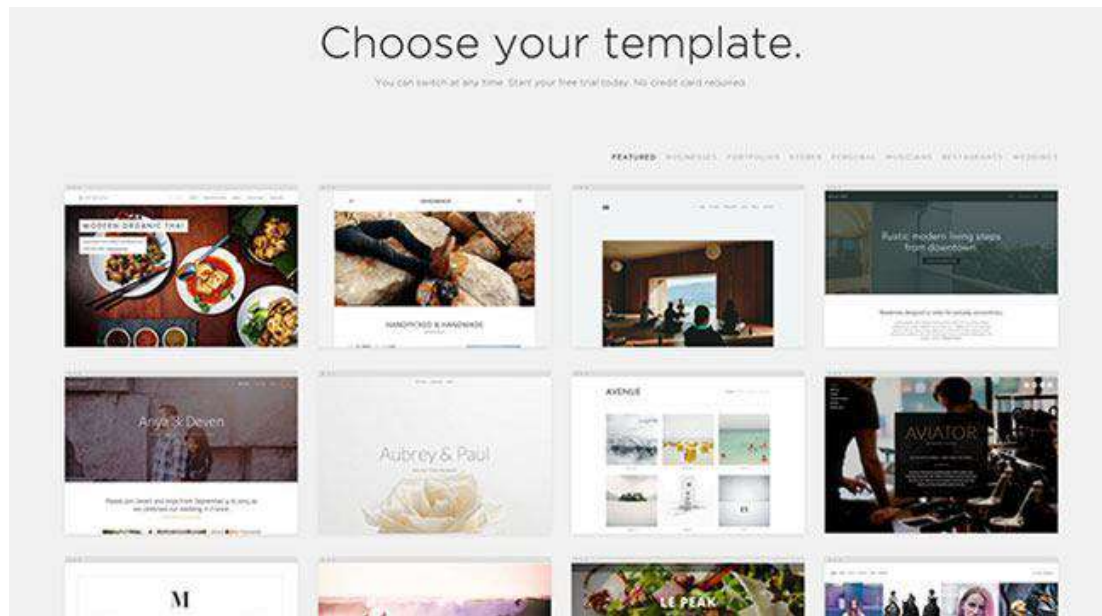
3. SUPPORT

Some CMSes have a robust forum community where you can ask questions of other users. If you think you might need help, be sure the theme you choose is popular in the forum.

4. SEO

When viewing the spec and description of the theme, see if one of its features is optimized for SEO.

8 Tips for Choosing a Theme (cont.)



5. RATINGS AND REVIEWS

Pay close attention to the ratings and reviews of the themes, both within the CMS community and in general online searches. Often, other users uncover glitches or usability problems you can avoid.

6. UPDATES

As technology and the internet evolves, so should your theme. Check how often it's updated—if it's been years, the company may not support it anymore.

7. FEATURES

Are you planning to write a blog? Upload a huge portfolio of photographs? Offer online payment or appointment booking? What about an event calendar? Be sure the theme is built for the way you'll be using the site.

8. FLEXIBILITY

If you plan to update your website with new content or change the look from time to time, look for a flexible template that allows for quick and easy edits.











Or... Hire a Professional to Build a Theme for You

If the checklist makes you woozy, this would be a perfectly acceptable step to consider hiring a professional. Many web developers and designers are happy to work with CMS themes to create a semi-customized website. You would provide them with all the information you've prepared up till now, plus the content you create in Chapter 7.



Pro-Tip: Bringing on a professional at this stage will be more affordable than hiring one from the beginning and you'll have the peace of mind of knowing the theme is right for your business.

End of Chapter Check-In Point

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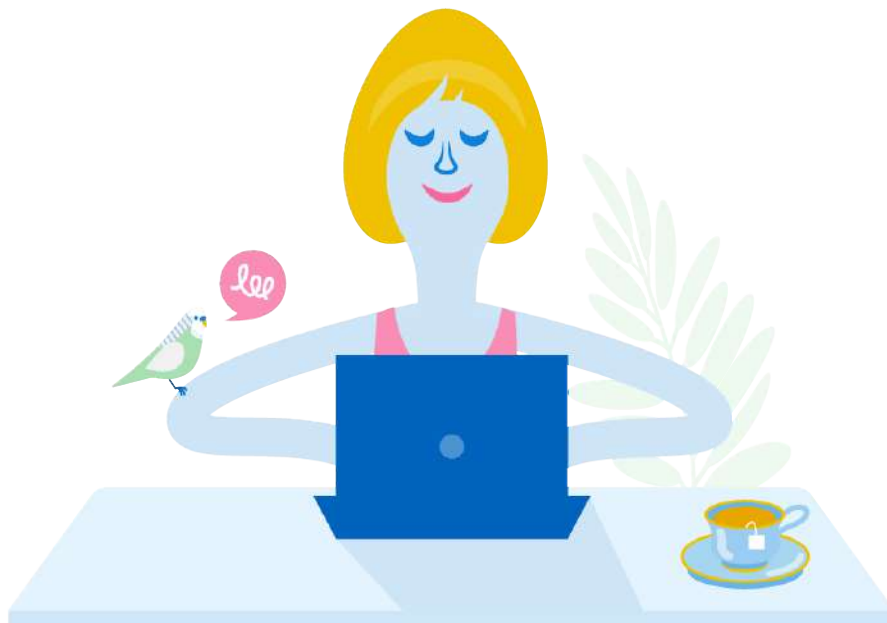
CHAPTER 7

Write the Content for Your Website Pages

Step 10a: Use Your Words!

If you don't consider yourself a wordsmith, it can be daunting to write content for your website.

Rest assured, you've got all the tools you need to craft compelling copy that represents your brand. And we've got some tips that'll help inspire you to show off your best work.



Pro-Tip: If writing really isn't your thing, consider hiring a professional. Share with them the insights you've already gathered, including the purpose of the website, your unique value proposition and the design and reasons for it.

Approaching Your Website Copy

1. REVISIT YOUR WEBSITE'S PURPOSE & YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Avoid the angry stare of the blank page by going back to your notes from Chapter 1.

Remind yourself of:

- Your website's purpose
- Why and how your visitors will use it
- Your unique value proposition

Write some key words for each of these considerations so you have a jumping off point.

2. RESEARCH OTHER WEBSITES FOR TONE AND VOICE INSPIRATION

For inspiration, visit the websites and social media accounts of companies you admire. Make note of what attributes you like and why. While you're at it, pop by some of your competitors' websites and see how they communicate.

3. START WRITING

By now, you should have a good sense of who you are, what you want to communicate and—most importantly—what your audience wants to know about you. Take your key words and insights about the appropriate tone you want to create on your website and off you go!

Learn More: [Copywriting Mistakes to Avoid](#)

Most Important Copywriting Tips

BE CONSISTENT

Think of your website as a sales presentation to a customer. Keep the same tone of voice on all pages.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Don't let your key information get lost in a sea of words. Keep it short and simple.

USE SUBHEADINGS AND LISTS

People don't like to read chunky paragraphs online. Give them the information they need in scannable form. Use headings. And if you're listing more than three items, put them in a bulleted list.

INCLUDE A CALL TO ACTION (CTA) ON EVERY PAGE

In marketing-speak, a CTA is an instruction to your reader to do something. People like to know what is expected of them. CTAs like "Email me for a free quote" inspire action.

CONSIDER OPTIMIZING FOR SEARCH (SEO)

Consider the ways people might search your type of business and include those key words into your writing, e.g. "dog walker in Cleveland". The content and key words you use on your pages will be indexed by Google, so the more often you say what you are, the better.



Pro-Tip: Don't compromise the quality of your writing for the sake of SEO. Write like a person first.

Step 10b: Get a Second Set of Eyes

Whether you hire a professional or call upon an eagle-eye employee, colleague or friend, editing is important!

Ask them to look for things like spelling and grammatical errors, but also to weigh in on whether you're achieving what you set out to do:

My value proposition is _____. Is that clear?

The purpose of my website is to_____.

Have I achieved that?

Is the tone of voice consistent across all pages?

Is there anything you don't understand?

Were you confused about any of the messages?

You might even give them a short list of information an ideal customer might be look for and ask them how many clicks and how much time it took for them to find answers.

A Next Level Content Strategy

Consider a blog: Google loves “content-rich” pages. You’ll appear more in search results if your website is updated often and features relevant information for readers.












Learn More: [Your Small Business Needs a Content Strategy](#)

And More: [Building a Content Calendar](#)

“ Content can start to feel fluffy if it’s not grounded in strategy. You want to give it a robust role to play in your business. Your content strategy sets that scene for success.

– Jane Flanagan, Content Director

End of Chapter Check-In Point

| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| Step 1 | Persona Building: Who Are Your Customers? |  |
| Step 2 | Identify Your Business Value Proposition |  |
| Step 3 | Identify What Customers Want from Your Website |  |
| Step 4 | Choose & Register Your Domain Name |  |
| Step 5 | Choose a Content Management System (CMS) |  |
| Step 6 | Choose a Web Host |  |
| Step 7 | Identify & Organize Your Website Pages / Sitemap |  |
| Step 8 | Gather Your Design Elements |  |
| Step 9 | Choose Your Theme/Template |  |
| Step 10 | Write & Edit the Content for Your Website Pages |  |
| Step 11 | QA - Test Your Website  | |
| Step 12 | Launch! | |

CHAPTER 8

Test and Launch Your Website

Step 12: QA - Test Your Website

You've done it! All of your design elements are in place and your web pages are singing with glorious copy. Well done! But wait—before you flip the switch and declare your website “live”, it's critical to test it thoroughly.

AVOID THE DREADED 404

The last thing you want is for a brand new prospect to be confronted with a glaring 404 Not Found Error or a web page that simply won't load.

REMEMBER, TECHNOLOGY ISN'T PERFECT

Sometimes a website runs beautifully on one type of browser and completely fails on another. It's best if you're the one who finds errors or glitches—not your customers. Ask a few employees or friends to help you take a fine-toothed comb to your website.



Pro-Tip: Most of the time, you'll find small tweaks that require quick fixes. But if you're struggling with browser compatibility or mobile friendliness, you'll need to consult with your CMS or web host for support.

What to Review: A Website QA Checklist

| VALUE | DESCRIPTION | Y/N |
|----------------------|---|-----|
| Copy | Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors (including in navigation buttons and CTAs) | |
| Social Media Buttons | All your social handles are properly linked | |
| Forms | Fill them out and see if they work | |
| Links | Any external links work | |
| Site Speed | You may need to connect with your web host if your site is slow to load | |
| Browsers | Internet Explorer Firefox Safari Chrome Opera | |
| Devices | PC desktop and laptop Mac desktop and laptop iPads and other tablets iPhones, Androids and other smartphones | |

Step 12: Launch Day Checklist

Once your website is officially live, take a deep breath—you did it! But before you go out and celebrate, there are some final things you'll want to review now that your website is out for the world to see.

| TASK | DESCRIPTION | Y/N |
|---|--|-----|
| QA (One More Time!) | Ensure nothing was broken during the transition. Main areas of focus: -All hyperlinks lead to the correct page -CTA buttons are clickable -UI / UX displays and functions according to plan | |
| Share the News with Your Clients | Send a short email to your top clients sharing the exciting news about the launch. Chances are, you built the website with them in mind, so giving them a heads up is a nice gesture. | |
| Spread the Word on Social Media | Reach the masses by sharing your business website on your social media profiles. You never know, you may even attract new clients. | |
| Write a Blog Post About the Launch | What motivated you to build a website for your business? It may be interesting to share this with an audience through a blog post. Don't have your blog set up on your website yet? In the meantime, Medium is a great place for your blog post to live. | |
| Add Your Website URL to Any of Your Professional Assets | This includes your: -Email signature -Company and personal social media pages (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) -Existing advertising assets | |

Congratulations! You've Built Your Website



| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| Step 1 | Persona Building: Who Are Your Customers? | ✓ |
| Step 2 | Identify Your Business Value Proposition | ✓ |
| Step 3 | Identify What Customers Want from Your Website | ✓ |
| Step 4 | Choose & Register Your Domain Name | ✓ |
| Step 5 | Choose a Content Management System (CMS) | ✓ |
| Step 6 | Choose a Web Host | ✓ |
| Step 7 | Identify & Organize Your Website Pages / Sitemap | ✓ |
| Step 8 | Gather Your Design Elements | ✓ |
| Step 9 | Choose Your Theme/Template | ✓ |
| Step 10 | Write & Edit the Content for Your Website Pages | ✓ |
| Step 11 | QA - Test Your Website | ✓ |
| Step 12 | Launch! | ✓ |



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CHAPTER 9

Develop a Maintenance Plan

You Have a Website Now—Maintain It

Your website is actively doing the work of representing your business to customers, prospects and the world at large. What a great feeling!

Before you skip off into the sunset, you should know—a website is not a “set it and forget it” undertaking.

- Websites are like living creatures; they need to be fed and watered (in their own technological way) in order to remain robust and relevant.
- Plus, Google loves handmade pages that are frequently updated.
- Keep your website at the top of the search index by tweaking your site on a regular basis.



Pro-Tip: It's so much easier to tweak & freshen things here and there rather than go through dramatic rebuilds every 5 years.

Simple Ways To Keep Your Website Fresh

1-3 TIMES A WEEK

- Write a blog. Consider your ideal customer and write brief posts to stay top-of-mind. Ideas include:
- Your take on industry news/trends
- Expert tips your customers would be interested in
- Photos from your job sites/office
- Updates on projects
- Shout outs to your favourite customers

EVERY 2-3 MONTHS

- Update your portfolio with new samples of your work.
- (Ideally you'll do this when you complete every project.)
- Add new testimonials.

SEMI-ANNUALLY

- Review every page to make sure the information is up to date and relevant. Update your services, pricing and keywords to accurately reflect the work you're doing.
- Take a tour of your competitors' websites to spot new trends in web design. It's relatively painless to choose a new theme on your CMS and move your content around.

ANNUALLY

- Create a content strategy and content calendar (for your blog).
- Look at the year ahead and decide what you're going to write about and when. It makes posting so much easier!

**For more small business advice,
follow us on social media**

