

WUNDERLANDMEDIA

Website Migration SEO Checklist

How to switch platforms without losing your rankings. Every step, every phase, nothing skipped.

By Kemal | wunderlandmedia.com

4

Phases

40+

Checklist Items

523

Avg Recovery Days

Migration Date: _____

Target Launch: _____

1 Pre-Migration: Benchmark Everything

10% of migrations actually improve rankings. The rest hold steady (if lucky) or tank. Most lose 20-40% of SEO value even when done well. Every hour spent benchmarking saves ten hours of panic later.

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

- ☐ **Record organic traffic for last 6 months (monthly)**
Export from GA4. This is your recovery benchmark. Without it, you can't measure if the migration succeeded.
- ☐ **Identify top 20 pages by traffic**
These are your priority pages. They make you money. Test them first, test them last, test them again after launch.
- ☐ **Export current keyword rankings for all target terms**
Use Ahrefs, SEMrush, or Search Console. You need the exact positions for post-migration comparison.
- ☐ **Document Core Web Vitals (LCP, INP, CLS)**
Both mobile and desktop. Screenshot PageSpeed Insights for each key page.
- ☐ **Export domain authority and full backlink profile**
Identify every URL with external links pointing to it. These URLs must have working redirects.
- ☐ **Record indexed page count from Search Console**
Pages > Indexed. Screenshot for reference. You'll compare after migration to catch missing pages.

FULL SITE EXPORT

- ☐ **Full site crawl: every URL on the site**
Screaming Frog, Sitebulb, or similar. Export to spreadsheet. This becomes your redirect map source.
- ☐ **Export all meta titles and descriptions**
Don't lose carefully written metadata to auto-generated CMS defaults. Export before, reimport after.
- ☐ **Export all internal links and anchor text**
Document the internal link structure so you can recreate it on the new platform.
- ☐ **Export all structured data markup**
Article schema, product schema, review schema. Document every type used. These must be recreated on the new site.
- ☐ **Export image URLs, alt text, and file locations**
Don't forget PDFs and downloadable files. Other sites may link directly to these assets.
- ☐ **Document canonical tags and hreflang attributes**
International sites: hreflang errors after migration are extremely common and hard to debug.

TECHNICAL PREP

- ☐ **Set up staging environment (blocked from crawlers)**
Use robots.txt disallow, noindex tags, AND password protection. Belt and suspenders. No staging URLs leaking to Google.
- ☐ **Full backup of current site (database + files)**
Keep the old site available as a fallback for at least 48 hours post-launch. Test that the backup works.
- ☐ **Document current robots.txt and sitemap structure**
Save copies. You'll need these when configuring the new site's crawl directives.

2 Redirect Mapping (The Most Critical Phase)

60%

of traffic loss in the first 30 days after migration is caused by redirect misconfiguration. More than half of all migration disasters come down to broken or missing redirects. This single phase determines success or failure.

URL MAPPING

- ☐ **Map every single URL (not just current pages)**
Every URL that has ever received traffic or has backlinks. Old blog posts from 2019 with 50 visits/month? Map them.
- ☐ **Map non-HTML assets: images, PDFs, downloads**
If other sites link to your images or documents, those links need redirects too. This gets overlooked constantly.
- ☐ **Map each URL to its closest equivalent on new site**
Blog post to blog post, category to category, product to product. One-to-one mapping wherever possible.
- ☐ **Handle pages with no equivalent on new site**
Redirect to the next best match (parent category, related post). Never to the homepage.

REDIRECT CONFIGURATION

- ☐ **Use 301 redirects only (not 302s)**
301 = permanent, passes full link equity. 302 = temporary, Google holds onto old URL and doesn't transfer authority.
- ☐ **Single-hop redirects only (no chains)**
A > B is correct. A > B > C is a chain. Each hop loses speed and dilutes equity. Point everything directly to the final URL.
- ☐ **Plan to keep redirects active for 1+ year minimum**
Google recommends at least one year. Keep them longer if possible. Removing redirects early is a common mistake.
- ☐ **Consider keeping existing URL structure**
If old URLs were /blog/post-title and new platform defaults to /posts/post-title, consider keeping the old format. Every URL change is a risk.

Never Redirect Everything to Homepage

Google treats mass homepage redirects as soft 404s. You lose all page-specific authority. I've seen this wipe out 80% of a site's traffic. Map each URL to its actual equivalent.

TESTING

- ☐ **Build a redirect testing spreadsheet**
Column A: old URL. Column B: expected new URL. Column C: actual result. Column D: status code.
- ☐ **Test every single redirect before launch**
Yes, even if there are 500 of them. Automated tools can bulk-check, but spot-check the top 50 manually.
- ☐ **Verify all redirects return 301 (not 302 or 307)**
Check the HTTP status code, not just "it works." A 302 looks the same to a human but signals "temporary" to Google.
- ☐ **Test redirects with and without trailing slashes**
/blog/post-title and /blog/post-title/ should both redirect correctly. Slash mismatches are surprisingly common.

CORRECT REDIRECT

/blog/old-post-title > 301 > /blog/old-post-title
/services/web-design > 301 > /services/web-design
/downloads/guide.pdf > 301 > /resources/guide.pdf

DISASTER

/blog/old-post-title > 301 > / (homepage)
/services/web-design > 302 > /services/design
/blog/* > 301 > / (wildcard to homepage)

3 Migration Day

Timing

Launch on a **Tuesday or Wednesday morning**. Not a Friday. Not before a holiday. You want a full work week ahead to catch and fix problems. Keep the old site as a fallback for at least 48 hours.

STEP-BY-STEP LAUNCH SEQUENCE

- ☐ **1. Remove all noindex/nofollow tags from the new site**
You blocked crawlers during staging. Now remove every blocking directive. Check every page template.
- ☐ **2. Activate all 301 redirects and verify they work**
Spot-check 20-30 URLs manually, then bulk-verify the rest. Every redirect must return a 301 status code.
- ☐ **3. Submit updated XML sitemap to Search Console**
New sitemap with all new URLs. Remove old sitemap references if URL structure changed.
- ☐ **4. Verify SSL certificate (no mixed content)**
All pages loading over HTTPS. No HTTP resources (images, scripts) on HTTPS pages. Check browser console.
- ☐ **5. Confirm analytics tracking fires on every page**
GA4 firing correctly. Check real-time report. Verify key events (form submissions, purchases) are tracked.
- ☐ **6. Test structured data on key pages**
Google Rich Results Test on your top 10 pages. Verify Article, Product, LocalBusiness schema migrated correctly.
- ☐ **7. Manually check all top 20 pages**
Content correct? Meta tags present? Images loading? Internal links working? Structured data intact? Check each one.
- ☐ **8. Verify robots.txt allows full crawling**
The #1 launch-day mistake: staging robots.txt blocking all crawlers carries over to production. Verify manually.
- ☐ **9. Submit Change of Address (domain migrations only)**
Google Search Console > Settings > Change of Address. Only needed when changing domains, not platform-only migrations.
- ☐ **10. Verify canonical tags point to new URLs**
Canonical tags still pointing to old URLs is a silent migration killer. Check the source code of key pages.

POST-LAUNCH SAME-DAY CHECKS

- ☐ **Run a quick crawl of the new site**
50-100 pages. Check for 404s, 500s, redirect loops, missing meta tags. Fix anything critical immediately.
- ☐ **Check Google Search Console for immediate crawl errors**
Errors may start appearing within hours. Monitor throughout the day.
- ☐ **Verify meta titles and descriptions weren't lost**
Spot-check 10-15 pages. If CMS auto-generated defaults replaced your metadata, fix immediately.
- ☐ **Test site on mobile device**
Actually use the site on a phone. Navigate, read, submit a form. Catch rendering issues no desktop test reveals.

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Post-Migration: First 30 Days

"The migration isn't done when the new site goes live. It's done when your traffic recovers. You can't fix what you don't measure."

From the post

DAILY MONITORING (FIRST 2 WEEKS)

- ☐ **Compare organic traffic to pre-migration baseline**
Some fluctuation is normal in week 1. A 20%+ drop with working redirects may still recover by week 3.
- ☐ **Check Search Console for new crawl errors**
404s, 500s, redirect loops. Fix immediately as they appear. New errors will surface daily as Google recrawls.
- ☐ **Monitor index coverage (new pages indexed, old deindexed)**
Are new URLs appearing in the index? Are old URLs being removed? Both should be happening simultaneously.
- ☐ **Track keyword rankings for target terms**
Expect fluctuation. Investigate any drops over 10 positions. Drops persisting past week 3 need urgent attention.

WEEKLY CHECKS

- ☐ **Monitor Core Web Vitals on the new platform**
New platform may perform differently. Compare to pre-migration scores. Fix any regressions.
- ☐ **Check AI Overview and SERP feature visibility**
Migrations can impact featured snippets and AI Overviews that took months to earn.
- ☐ **Review new backlink reports for broken links to old URLs**
External sites may still link to old URLs. Verify those redirects are working.

MILESTONE CHECKS

- ☐ **Day 7: Run full post-migration crawl**
Compare to pre-migration crawl. Check for missing pages, broken links, missing metadata, missing schema.
- ☐ **Day 14: Assess redirect coverage**
Are there old URLs still getting 404 errors? Check Search Console and fix any missing redirects.
- ☐ **Day 30: Full migration audit**
Traffic recovered? Rankings stable? All pages indexed? If not recovering by day 30, investigate urgently.

Recovery Timeline

Scenario	Expected Recovery
Issues caught in week 1	4-8 weeks
Issues unnoticed for 1 month	3-6 months
Domain change (everything done right)	Up to 1 year
17% of domain migrations	Never fully recover

The 20% Rule

If traffic drops more than 20% in week 1 and redirects are all working, don't panic. Some fluctuation is normal as Google recrawls. But if it hasn't started recovering by week 3, start investigating immediately.

! Common Migration Mistakes

Mistake	What Happens	Impact
Redirect everything to homepage	Google treats as soft 404. All page-specific authority destroyed.	Up to 80% traffic loss
Forget to update robots.txt	Staging robots.txt blocks all crawlers. Google can't crawl anything.	100% crawl blocked
Lose metadata	CMS auto-generates defaults replacing carefully written titles/descriptions.	CTR drops 20-40%
Skip structured data	Rich results (stars, FAQs, how-tos) disappear from search results.	Rich results lost
No post-launch monitoring	Traffic down 40% and nobody notices for weeks. Recovery delayed by months.	Delayed recovery
Change URLs unnecessarily	Every URL change is a risk. If old structure works, keep it.	Avoidable risk
Use 302 instead of 301	Google treats move as temporary. Doesn't transfer authority to new URL.	Authority not passed
Remove redirects too early	Google loses the connection between old and new URLs. Rankings drop.	Rankings drop

? When to DIY vs. Hire Help

Scenario	Recommendation
Same domain, same URLs, visual redesign only	DIY is fine
Small site (<50 pages), no significant traffic	DIY is fine
Platform change with URL structure changes	Get help
100+ pages with established organic traffic	Get help
Significant backlinks that need preserving	Get help
International site with hreflang attributes	Get help
Changing domains entirely	Expert required
Merging multiple sites into one	Expert required
Enterprise site (1000+ pages)	Expert required
Revenue directly depends on organic traffic	Expert required

The Math

The cost of hiring someone to manage a migration properly is almost always less than the cost of lost traffic. I've seen businesses lose months of revenue from botched migrations. A few thousand dollars for expert help looks cheap compared to that.

Migration Statistics & Reference

Metric	Value
Migrations that actually improve rankings	~10%
Typical SEO value loss (even when done well)	20-40%
Traffic loss caused by redirect misconfiguration	60%+ of migration disasters
Average recovery time for domain migrations	523 days
Domain migrations that never fully recover	17%
Traffic loss from mass homepage redirects	Up to 80%
Minimum redirect retention period (Google)	1 year

Phase Timeline

Phase	When	Duration	Items
1. Pre-Migration	2-4 weeks before launch	1-2 days	15
2. Redirect Mapping	1-2 weeks before launch	2-8 hours	12
3. Migration Day	Launch day	2-4 hours	14
4. Post-Migration	Days 1-30	Ongoing	10

"Only about 10% of migrations actually improve search rankings. The rest either hold steady if you're lucky, or tank. The boring stuff, the redirect map, the metadata export, the monitoring, that's what saves you."

Kemal, Wunderlandmedia

The Bottom Line

A website migration doesn't have to be a disaster. But it does require respect for the process. Benchmark everything before you start. Build your redirect map like your business depends on it, because it does. Monitor obsessively for the first month. And don't skip the boring stuff. The boring stuff is what saves you.

Read the Full Guide

wunderlandmedia.com/website-migration-seo-checklist

Planning a migration? We can make sure nothing falls through the cracks. wunderlandmedia.com

Migration Tracking Sheet

Key Dates

Milestone	Date
Pre-migration benchmark completed	
Full site crawl exported	
Redirect map completed	
All redirects tested	
Staging site approved	
Launch date	
Day 7 crawl completed	
Day 14 redirect review	
Day 30 full audit	
Traffic recovery confirmed	

Pre-Migration Benchmarks (Fill In)

Metric	Value
Monthly organic traffic (avg last 6 mo)	
Indexed pages	
Domain authority / DR	
Total backlinks	
LCP (mobile)	
INP (mobile)	
CLS (mobile)	

Notes / Issues Found