

# 50 Step Author Website Checklist

This list started out with 45 steps; I've added a few special extras since then! • Contains affiliate links for services I love and use myself.

Are you ready to create your first author website?

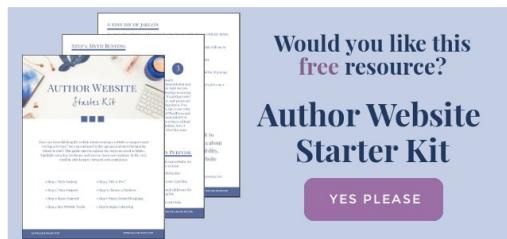
Is it time to refresh the site you already have?

A website project is a significant undertaking, but if you break it down into steps, you'll feel less overwhelmed and help keep momentum going. Whether you choose to work with a website designer like me for a [custom website](#), or you prefer to tackle your site as a [DIY project](#), here are the main things to look out for as you move from idea to completion.

For a little more support, coaching, and hand-holding when you need it, you might love my [small group website program](#) too.

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1. Decide the main **purpose** of your website.
2. Figure out the titles of a few **key pages**.
3. Consider your **skills** & comfort level with technology.
4. Decide how much of the work you'll do yourself. [Consult](#) with potential professionals, if you need to. (Here are some [great questions to ask](#).)
5. Choose the **platform (technology)** you'll use. Here are the [pros and cons of WordPress, Carrd, and Squarespace](#). And here's my 2022 guide to [how much your author website should cost](#).
6. Make sure you're **clear** on your ideal visitor, the action they should take, and the key impression or feeling you want to convey *before* you begin constructing your site.
7. Start to **gather** words, images, photos, book covers, book blurbs, links, social media profiles, and book reviews you'd like to include.
8. Decide how you want to be contacted through your website, if at all.



These first 8 steps are explained in detail in my free Author Website Starter Kit. Get yours above.

9. Create an **account**, and/or install the technology you chose in step 5. Depending on that choice, you might need to purchase hosting at this stage, too. ([Squarespace](#) and [Carrd](#) include hosting for you, making them more convenient, I think, than WordPress.)
10. Create your first few **pages**. A small number of pages will be much more manageable at first.
11. Make sure the page address (or url) is meaningful: search engines use this to understand what your page is about.
12. Add **text** to these pages. Remember you can iterate: it doesn't have to be perfect initially! Avoid adding too many words: most readers will skim your website copy for key points.
13. Choose the **font** for your text. A single font is fine, or you can pick one heading font and a complementary body font. Never sacrifice legibility: a beautiful font may be hard to read.
14. Choose the **images** you'll use, and add those. Remember that nothing lets a website down faster than poor images. If you love your book covers, give them pride of place. Make sure your image file sizes aren't too huge, or your page will load slowly and be penalized by search engines. Link images to relevant pages or products.
15. Choose your website **colors**. Again, you can tweak these as you go, just make sure you stay consistent. Pay close attention to your book covers, when you pick other colors. Remember that good contrast for your text against your background is vital.
16. Incorporate **links** and social media profiles.
17. Publish a **draft** version, if your technology allows this.
18. Check how your website looks on a **smaller screen**. It's worth doing this before you finalize the elements on each page. A simple layout which looks good on mobile is far better than something complex which doesn't behave on a phone.
19. Get **feedback** from 1-2 trusted people.
20. **Amend** your words, images & layouts according to your results from steps 16-18.
21. Identify words which your ideal reader may use to **search** for books, writing, or services like yours. Make sure you incorporate some of these in your text, but always write for humans before robots. Depending on the technology you're using, look for other places where you can add search tags, like page descriptions.
22. Nonetheless: give your website a short, meaningful **description** (in a meta tag) to help search engines know what you do.
23. Create a **privacy policy** to let visitors know how you'll use their information, and to stay compliant with the law. To make sure this can be seen easily from every page, place it in the footer.
24. If your site uses any kind of **cookies**, check that you have the appropriate visitor consent form or pop up in place.
25. Add your **contact information** and/or set up a contact form, if you're using one.
26. Place a **copyright year** in your footer. And pop a reminder in your calendar for the first week of January, to update it!
27. Add a **favicon** if you'd like (the tiny image which displays alongside your site title, in the browser tab).
28. Remove any **branding** that shows the technology you used (for example, *powered by Wordpress* or *made with Wix*). Unless you're using a free service, it should be possible to take out these credits.

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29. Will you be offering an email list **signup** and/or a **lead magnet** to encourage people to join your list? Set these up now, keeping your fonts and colors consistent. Or, treat this as a secondary project, once your main website is live.
  30. **Test** your email signup form and/or your contact form.
  31. Create a **pop up** and/or top banner message, if wanted.
  32. If your platform allows this, set the **social share image** that will display when someone links to your site on social media.
  33. Create a **custom 404 "not found"** page, so that your visitors get useful information if something goes wrong.
  34. **Proofread** all your text carefully. Ask a friend to do the same: they will spot things that you don't.
  35. **Check** all your links. Ideally, links to external websites should open in a new tab or window. Don't forget to link your book covers to purchase pages.
  36. **Claim** your website for Pinterest, if you wish.
  37. Add the code for **Google Analytics** to your website, or use the integration provided by your website platform.
  38. **Repeat** step 17. Do not take shortcuts with how your website behaves on a mobile device.
  39. As well as checking your site on smaller screens, ideally you'll also test it in different desktop browsers.
  40. Purchase a **domain** name, if you wish. My preferred provider for ease of use and transparent pricing is Google Domains.
  41. Edit the **DNS** records of your domain, so that your website is now live.
  42. **Check again** that everything is working, including any pop ups and forms.
  43. These days, your provider should issue your site's **SSL certificate** without you needing to jump through hoops. But, check that your site shows as "https" in the browser address, just to be sure.
  44. Submit your **sitemap** to Google, to improve your chances of being found.
  45. **Backup** your website, either using the technology you chose, or (at a minimum) by taking screenshots and saving text & images in one place.
  46. Make a careful note of the color codes you used, so your entire brand can stay **consistent**. Expand this to a brand stylesheet / mood board, if you'd like.
  47. Update any **social media profiles** so they coordinate with your website branding and link back to your website address.
  48. Design and order coordinating **business cards** and other print collateral.
  49. **Share** your new website with readers, family, and friends. Celebrate your finished site by posting on social media. Add your website address to your email footer.
  50. Make a calendar entry to **review, refresh, and backup** your site. Depending how much content you have, every 3-12 months is a good interval.

As a Squarespace website designer, I also recommend the [Squarespace SEO checklist](#) and the [Squarespace site launch checklist](#).



Would you like a professional quality Squarespace website?

Start with a [premium website template](#) and follow the included video training, to replace the content with your own and launch quickly and easily.

SHOP TEMPLATES

Hopefully you realize these items are intended as a checklist, not a detailed how-to guide!

Some of the steps are extremely fast, while others will take you (or your website designer) much longer. Most of my author clients report that they find step 6 incredibly useful, and few of them appreciate in advance how much value I will add for them, as we move together from step 1-49.

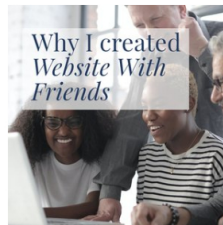
If you'd like someone to **coordinate the whole project for you**, offering friendly accountability and marketing expertise as we collaborate on your site design, you can [view my custom website design services here](#).

Or, for a more affordable option with lots of help from me, my [small group program](#) offers a **done-with-you website**.

You might also like:



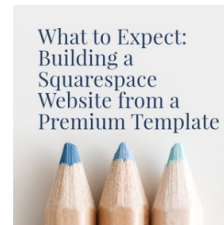
7 Tips to Get Your Website Done



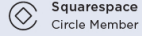
Why I created Website With Friends



Should You Hire a Website Designer? Possibly Not.



What's It Like to Build Your Squarespace Website From a Premium Template?



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