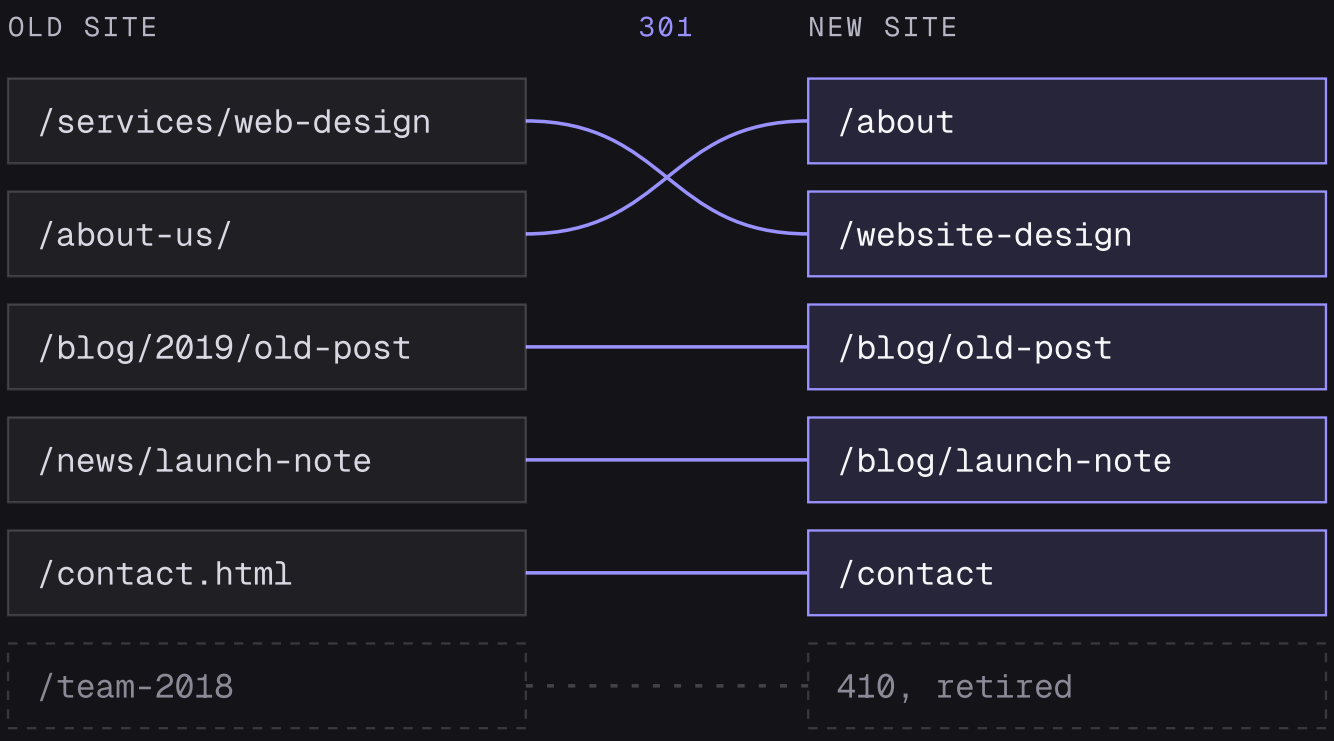
KOOKIES

GUIDE

The Site Move Playbook

6 CHAPTERS



WEBSITE MIGRATION

Move your site without the guesswork.

To move a site safely, list every old URL, map each one straight to its new address, rebuild everything that earns on the new site, launch from a written run sheet, then watch for 30 days. No move comes with a ranking guarantee, and some movement is normal. This playbook is how you remove the avoidable risks, from the first decision to the last check.

Who it is for. Marketing leads, founders and developers who are moving a marketing site to a new platform, host or domain, or deciding whether they should.

01 Is moving worth it?

02 Crawl and inventory every URL

03 Build the redirect map

04 Rebuild content, SEO, forms and tracking

05 Launch day order

06 The first 30 days

Read online at www.kookies.io/guides/site-move-playbook. Updated 2026-11-07.

CHAPTER 1 OF 6

Is moving worth it?

01

Move only when your platform blocks the work and a fix in place cannot remove the block. Here is how to tell, and how to pick the smallest move that does the job.

The short answer

A move is worth it when the platform itself stops your team from doing work the business needs, and you have tried or priced a fix in place. It is not worth it because the site looks old, because a new tool is popular, or because traffic dipped last quarter. A new look does not need a new platform, and a slow site can often be made quick where it is.

A move always costs something. There is the build, a content freeze, and a stretch when search results move around. Google's own site move guide says to expect temporary fluctuation in ranking during a move. So the question is not "would the new platform be nicer?" It is "what will we be able to do after the move that we cannot do now, and is that worth the cost?"

Fix in place, or move?

Start with the problem, not the platform. Most complaints fall into one of these rows.

THE COMPLAINT	TRY THIS FIRST	MOVE WHEN
The site is slow	Compress images, remove old scripts and plugins, fix fonts and hosting. See Core Web Vitals.	You have done this and the platform or theme still holds you back.
Marketing waits on developers	Build reusable sections and a simple CMS structure on the current platform.	Editors still cannot publish a page safely without help.
It breaks after updates	Remove plugins, pin versions, move to better hosting.	Upkeep keeps eating time that should go to new work.
It looks dated	A redesign on the same platform.	The design you want cannot be built well on it.
We cannot connect our tools	Check for an official app, a script, or a small piece of middleware. See integrations.	The tools you rely on have no sane way to connect.
Traffic fell	Find out why first. Look at Search Console by page and query.	Almost never a reason on its own. A move will not fix content or demand.
Fees are too high	Check the plan, and cut seats and add-ons you do not use.	The total cost, including people, is clearly lower elsewhere.

DECISION RULE

Write the problem as one sentence with a person in it: "Our marketing lead cannot publish a landing page without a developer." If you cannot write that sentence, you are not ready to move.

Five questions to score the move

Answer these with your team. Be honest, and write the answers down, because you will need them when the project gets hard and someone asks why you started.

1. **What can we not do today?** Name the work, the person and how often it comes up.
2. **Have we priced a fix in place?** If nobody has asked, ask. It may be a week of work instead of a project.
3. **How much does the current site earn?** Pull clicks, leads and sales by page. The more it earns, the more care the move needs.
4. **Who owns the move?** One person who decides on edge cases and signs off the launch. No owner, no move.
5. **Is there a quiet window?** Avoid your busiest season, a big campaign, or a product launch.

If you get a clear answer to question 1 and a named person for question 4, go on. If question 1 is vague, stay where you are and fix the small things. Coming back in six months costs nothing.

Know which kind of move you are making

"Migration" covers very different jobs, with very different risk. Name yours before you plan anything.

KIND OF MOVE	WHAT CHANGES	MAIN RISK	GOOGLE GUIDE
New host, same URLs	Where the site is served	DNS and firewalls blocking crawlers	No URL changes
New platform, same URLs	The system, and maybe the HTML	Lost titles, schema, forms and tracking	No URL changes for the host part
New platform, new URLs	System and addresses	All of the above, plus broken links	With URL changes
New domain	The whole address	All of the above, plus signals moving to a new name	With URL changes and Change of Address
Move plus redesign plus new copy	Everything at once	When something drops, you cannot tell why	Split it if you can

Keeping your URLs is the biggest risk you can remove. On one revamp we kept the same URLs, titles, meta, schema and internal links, so the design could change without search engines having to learn a new site.

DECISION RULE

Change as few things at once as the goal allows. A new platform with the same URLs and the same copy is a far safer project than a new platform, new URLs and new words. Rewrite the copy after the move has settled.

All at once, or in stages?

Google's site move guide recommends that small and medium sites move all URLs at the same time, and says larger sites can move one section at a time. For most marketing sites, the answer is one go.

Stages make sense when the site is very large or when some part cannot move yet. A reverse proxy can serve pages that are not moving yet under your domain, so it all reads as one site. That is real extra work and someone has to own it for as long as it runs. Our post on moving a site in stages covers the trade-offs.

CHOOSE	IF
All at once	The site is small or medium, and you can freeze content for the last days of the build.
In stages	The site is large, a section depends on a system you cannot replace yet, and someone will own the proxy.

When to stay put

Say no to the move if any of these is true. It is a real answer, and often the right one.

- ✓ The goal is a new look, and your platform can build it.
- ✓ You have a launch or your best sales season in the next two months.
- ✓ Nobody can spend time on content checks and sign-off.
- ✓ The real problem is the offer or the copy, not the site.
- ✓ You would be moving because a tool is new, with no job it does better for you.

If you are still choosing a platform, our comparisons are a good next read, for example Webflow vs WordPress.

Write a one-page move brief

Before anyone starts a crawl, put this on one page. It keeps the project honest and gives you something to check the launch against.

- ✓ **The problem,** in the one sentence from above.
- ✓ **The move,** by kind: host, platform, URLs, domain.
- ✓ **What stays the same.** URLs, copy and design, wherever you can.
- ✓ **The owner,** and who signs off content, SEO, forms and tracking.
- ✓ **The window,** with launch dates to avoid.
- ✓ **What you will watch** afterwards, and for how long. Chapter 6 has the list.

If you want a second pair of eyes on it, see our WordPress to Webflow and Webflow to Astro services, or the full list of moves on our services page.

TAKEAWAYS

- Move only when the platform blocks real work and a fix in place cannot remove the block.
- Name the kind of move. Keeping your URLs removes the biggest risk.
- Change as few things at once as you can. Copy rewrites can wait.
- Small and medium sites should usually move all at once, per Google. Stages suit large sites with a part that cannot move yet.
- No named owner and no quiet window means not yet.

CHAPTER 2 OF 6

Crawl and inventory every URL

02

You cannot redirect a page you do not know about. Combine six sources into one sheet, save a snapshot of each page, and sort everything by what it earns.

The short answer

Build one sheet with every URL your site has, from six sources, not just the ones in the menu. Then save what each page says today and what it earns today. This sheet decides what you rebuild, feeds your redirect map, and gives you something to compare against after launch.

Nothing here is hard, but it is the step people skip. The URLs that hurt later are usually the ones nobody remembered: an old campaign page, a PDF that other sites link to, a tag archive that picked up clicks.

Six sources, because each one misses something

No single source sees everything. Use them all, and merge the results.

SOURCE	WHAT IT FINDS	WHAT IT MISSES
Site crawl (Screaming Frog or similar)	Everything linked from your pages, with status codes, titles and canonicals	Pages with no internal links
XML sitemap	What the CMS thinks is live	Hard-coded pages, and pages the plugin leaves out
Search Console, Performance and Pages	URLs Google knows and sends clicks to, including old ones	Pages with no impressions
Analytics, landing pages for the last 12 months	Pages people arrive on, including ad and email traffic	Visits from people who declined tracking
Backlink tool	Old URLs other sites link to, including dead ones	Links it has not found yet
Your own lists	Ad landing pages, QR codes, email links, PDFs in sales decks	Whatever nobody wrote down, so ask around

The Search Console screen caps how many rows you can export. On a large site, pull the data through its API, or export by folder.

Also ask your sales and marketing teams one question: "What links do you send people that are not in the menu?" You will usually get an answer that surprises someone.

The URLs people forget

Go through this list on purpose. Each of these has caught someone out.

- [x] Ad and campaign landing pages kept out of the menu, and sometimes marked `noindex`.
- [x] Thank-you pages. Goals and ad conversions are often tied to them.
- [x] PDFs, images and downloads that other sites link to.
- [x] Blog tag, category, author and page-two archives.
- [x] Language and country folders.
- [x] Old redirects already on the server. They must be carried over, or they break quietly.
- [x] `www` and non-`www`, `http` and `https`, with and without a trailing slash.
- [x] Subdomains such as `blog.` or `help.`, if they are part of the move.
- [x] Pages used by other systems, such as a form embedded in your app or a webhook endpoint.

What to record for each URL

One row per URL. These columns are enough, and they become the start of your redirect map in the next chapter.

COLUMN	WHY
URL and status code	Tells you what is live, redirected or already broken
Title, meta description, H1	You carry these across, and compare them after launch
Canonical and robots	Shows what is meant to be indexed
Schema types	Easy to lose on a rebuild
Internal links in	Shows which pages your own site treats as important
Clicks and impressions, last 12 months	From Search Console
Sessions and conversions	From analytics, if you have them
Links from other sites	From your backlink tool
Forms and tools on the page	So each one gets rebuilt and tested
Tier and owner	Filled in below

Use 12 months if you can, so seasonal pages show up. A page that earns only in December looks dead in March.

Sort everything into tiers

Not every page needs the same care. Tiers tell you where to spend your time, what to test by hand and what to check first after launch.

TIER	WHAT IS IN IT	HOW YOU TREAT IT
A	Pages with clicks, links from other sites or leads. Plus money pages, even if quiet: pricing, contact, demo.	Rebuild carefully. Compare line by line. Test by hand.

TIER	WHAT IS IN IT	HOW YOU TREAT IT
B	Indexed pages with a little traffic. Most blog posts.	Rebuild or merge. Check by script, and spot check.
C	No clicks, no links, no conversions in 12 months.	Decide: keep, merge or retire. Do not move them out of habit.

DECISION RULE

A page with links from other sites or any conversions is never tier C, however little traffic it gets. Retiring a page is fine. Retiring it by accident is not.

A move is a good moment to retire thin pages. Be careful with this on a tier C page with a long tail of small queries. Check its queries before you cut it, and merge it into a stronger page where the topic fits.

Save the "before" picture

Once the move is live, you can never look at the old site again the way it was. Do this before anything changes.

- ✓ Export Search Console data by page and by query, for the last 12 months, and keep the file.
- ✓ Note leads and sales by month, and what normal looks like for the season.
- ✓ Keep the full crawl, with the date in the file name.
- ✓ Take full-page screenshots of your tier A pages.
- ✓ Note current speed and Core Web Vitals for your top templates.
- ✓ Back up the old site and its CMS content where you can get an export.
- ✓ Write down who has access to DNS, hosting, the domain and analytics. You will need all of them on launch day.

Keep the results in one shared folder. If something looks odd two months later, this is what you will reach for. It is also how you can tell a real drop from a normal seasonal one.

Freeze, and agree when

The inventory goes stale the moment someone publishes a new post. Agree a content freeze date with your team, as late as you safely can and well before launch. After the freeze, new content waits, or gets added to both sites and logged in the sheet.

Run one more crawl of the old site at the freeze, and compare it with your sheet. Anything new gets a row.

DONE WHEN

This chapter is done when one person can answer "what happens to this URL?" for every row, and when you have the before picture saved.

Our redesign checklist has more on what to save before a rebuild.

TAKEAWAYS

- Combine six sources. A crawl alone misses pages with no internal links.
- Hunt for the forgotten URLs: campaign pages, PDFs, thank-you pages, old redirects.
- Tier by what a page earns. A page with links or conversions is never tier C.
- Save the before picture while you still can.
- Agree a content freeze, and crawl again when it starts.

CHAPTER 3 OF 6

Build the redirect map

03

One row per old URL, pointing straight to its final new URL. The rules for moved, merged and retired pages, the status codes to use, and how to test before launch.

The short answer

A redirect map is one row per old URL, pointing straight at the new URL that replaces it, turned into permanent server-side redirects on launch day. Use a 301 or 308. Match by meaning, so a pricing post goes to a pricing page, not the home page. Send every old URL straight to its final address, with no chains.

Google's site move guide is plain on all of this, and there is no clever shortcut. The work is in the care you take row by row. Our free redirect map tool does the first matching for you in your browser, so you can spend your time on the rows that need a person.

Decide what happens to each URL

Every row from your inventory gets one of four outcomes.

OUTCOME	WHEN	WHAT THE SERVER DOES
Same URL	The page stays at the same address	Nothing. No rule is needed. This is the best case.
Moved	Same content at a new address	301 to the new URL
Merged	Several old pages now live in one new page	301 each old URL to that one page
Retired	You are not moving it, and nothing else covers the topic	Return 404 or 410

The merged and retired rows are where people go wrong. Google says not to redirect many old URLs to one irrelevant page, such as the new home page, and that URLs you are not moving should return a 404 or 410. Consolidated content is the exception: if old pages really were combined into a new one, redirect them to it.

DECISION RULE

Would someone who clicked the old link be happy to land here? If yes, redirect. If no, let it return a 404 or 410, with a helpful 404 page. Do not send it to the home page to feel safe.

Which status code

The code tells search engines whether the change is for good. From Google's redirects documentation:

TYPE	HOW GOOGLE TREATS IT	USE IT FOR
301, 308 (server)	Permanent. The target is treated as the canonical URL.	Every row in your map

TYPE	HOW GOOGLE TREATS IT	USE IT FOR
302, 303, 307 (server)	Temporary. It follows them, but does not take them as a sign the target should be canonical.	Short-term changes. Not a site move.
Instant meta refresh	Treated as permanent	Only when your host offers nothing better
Delayed meta refresh	Treated as temporary	Avoid
JavaScript redirect	Can be read as permanent, but only if rendering works	Last resort

Check what your platform really sends. Some tools and plugins say "redirect" and send a 302, so test the status code, not the setting.

Clean up the addresses

Two URLs that look the same to you may be different to a server. Decide these once, and write them at the top of the sheet.

- **Trailing slash.** Pick one form. `/about/` and `/about` are different URLs.
- **Capitals.** `/About-Us` and `/about-us` may be different on your old host.
- **Host and protocol.** Pick one of `www` or non-`www`, and `https`. Send the others straight to it.
- **Query strings.** Tracking codes need no rules of their own. Filtered or paged URLs need a decision.
- **Files.** PDFs and images with links from other sites keep their address, or get a row.
- **Languages.** Map each language on its own, and update hreflang to the new URLs.

No chains and no loops

If an old URL redirects to B, and B now redirects to C, send the old URL straight to C. Your old server may already hold years of redirects, so go through them too, and update each to the final address.

Google's site move guide says Googlebot can follow up to 10 hops, but advises redirecting straight to the final destination. If you cannot, it asks you to keep the chain short, ideally no more than 3 and fewer than 5. A chain also slows people down. Loops, where two rules point at each other, simply break the page.

BEFORE	AFTER
`/old-pricing` to `/pricing/` to `/pricing`	`/old-pricing` to `/pricing`
`http://site.com/a` to `https://site.com/a` to `https://www.site.com/a` to `https://www.site.com/b`	`http://site.com/a` to `https://www.site.com/b`, where your host allows it
`/a` to `/b`, and `/b` to `/a`	Pick the real page, and remove the other rule

A shortcut: the redirect map tool

The redirect map tool takes your old list and your new list as plain URLs, CSV or sitemap XML. It runs only in your browser and sends us nothing.

1. Paste the old URLs and the new URLs.
2. It matches them and marks each row exact, high, medium, low or none.
3. It flags chains, loops, duplicates and rows where nothing changed.
4. Read every medium, low and unmatched row, and change what is wrong.
5. Export a Webflow CSV, a `vercel.json` block, a `_redirects` file, or a plain CSV.

A matching tool gets you a draft. It reads addresses, not meaning, so a person still has to read the rows that matter. Treat every tier A page as needing your own eyes, whatever the confidence says.

Rules, patterns and limits

Use one exact rule per URL for your tier A and B pages. Patterns are fine when a whole folder moves the same way, such as `/news/*` to `/blog/*`, but check the exceptions first.

Check your new host's limits before you plan on 5,000 single rules. Webflow, Vercel, Netlify and Cloudflare each handle redirects in their own way, with their own limits and formats, and those limits vary by plan and change over time. Read the current docs for your plan. If a list is too long, group by pattern, or handle it at a layer in front of the site.

Our redirect map template has the sheet columns if you prefer to start by hand.

Test before launch

Do not wait for launch day to find out the map is wrong. Most of this can be done before the switch.

- ✓ Every new URL in the map exists and returns 200 on staging.
- ✓ No new URL in the map is itself an old URL with another rule.
- ✓ No two rows share the same old URL.
- ✓ Rules load on staging if your host allows it, and a script or crawler checks a sample.
- ✓ Tier A rows are checked by a person: is this the right page?
- ✓ One person signs off, and a dated copy of the map is saved.

> DONE WHEN
>
> Launch only when every old URL with clicks or links has an answer that a person has checked, and no row is still blank.

On launch day you run the same check against the live site, using your whole old URL list. Chapter 5 covers that.

TAKEAWAYS

- One row per old URL, straight to the final new URL. Same URL is the best outcome.
- Use 301 or 308. Test the status code your platform really sends.
- Do not send retired pages to the home page. Let them return a 404 or 410.
- Flatten old redirects so there are no chains or loops.
- A tool gives you a draft. A person reads every tier A row.

CHAPTER 4 OF 6

Rebuild content, SEO, forms and tracking

04

Whatever earns for you on the old site has to exist on the new one, and be proven to work. A parity check for content and SEO, and real tests for forms and tracking.

The short answer

Before launch, the new site must match the old one on everything that earns: the words, the titles and meta, the schema, the internal links, the forms and the tracking. Then prove it, with a crawl comparison and real test submissions. "It looks right" is not a test. The problems that hurt after launch are usually small and invisible: a form that sends to an old inbox, a `noindex` left on a template, an event that never reaches analytics.

Content: move it, do not rewrite it

Keep tier A copy word for word through the move. If rankings shift, you want to know the move caused it, not a new headline. Improve the copy after things settle.

- ✓ Every page in the inventory that is staying has a home on the new site.
- ✓ Body copy, headings and link text came across whole, including hidden tabs and accordions.
- ✓ Images came across with their alt text, and are sized and compressed.
- ✓ Downloads and PDFs were moved, and links to them still work.
- ✓ CMS items were imported in full, with dates and authors kept, and rich text checked for broken formatting.
- ✓ Words like "lorem ipsum", "test" and "sample" are gone, including from hidden panels and mobile-only blocks.

That last one is real. In the check before launching our own new site, we scanned every built page for test wording, and found some in a hidden panel left over from a prototype. A search over the built HTML takes minutes.

SEO parity, page by page

Crawl the staging site and compare it with your inventory crawl, by URL. Keep the same URLs, titles, meta, schema and internal links wherever a page is staying. That is the standard to aim for.

CHECK	ON THE NEW SITE	HOW TO CHECK
Title and meta	Same as before, unless you chose to change one	Crawl comparison
H1 and headings	Same message and order	Crawl comparison

CHECK	ON THE NEW SITE	HOW TO CHECK
Canonical	Points at itself, using the new URL	Crawl: canonical equals URL
Robots	No stray `noindex` at launch. Keep a list of what to remove.	Crawl, then search the HTML
Internal links	Point at new URLs, not through redirects	Crawl: no internal 301s
Schema	Same types, valid, with new URLs	Rich Results Test on each template
Hreflang	Updated to new URLs, on every version	Crawl comparison
Sitemap	New URLs only, matching the canonicals	Open it and compare
robots.txt	Blocks only what you mean to block	Read the file
Social images	Exist, and open without errors	Open each image URL

The canonical, hreflang, internal link and robots points all come from Google's site move guide. Two more checks that catch real problems: when we audited our own new build, 16 pages pointed at social images that did not exist, and sitemap URLs did not match our canonical URLs until we fixed the trailing slash. Neither showed up on screen.

> DECISION RULE
>
> A row in the comparison can differ only if someone chose the change and wrote down why. Any other difference is a bug.

Hide staging, and plan how to unhide it

You do not want staging in search results, and you do not want the launch to carry over the block. Protect staging with a password if your host allows it, or use `noindex`.

Google suggests preparing the list of URLs where you will remove `noindex`, and getting the final robots.txt ready, before launch. Write down the exact steps, and put them on your launch sheet in chapter 5.

Carry over your Search Console verification too, whether it is a file, a meta tag or a DNS record. Verify the new property before launch if the address is changing.

Forms: send a real one

Forms are where a move can cost you the most and show it the least. List every form, on every page, and test each one all the way to where the message lands.

FOR EACH FORM	CHECK
Where it sends	The right inbox, CRM or sheet, and a person confirms it arrived
Every field	All values arrive in the right column, including dropdowns and hidden fields
Campaign data	UTM tags and the page it was sent from are kept, if you used them
After sending	The success message or thank-you page shows

FOR EACH FORM	CHECK
Spam guard	A honeypot or similar is working, and real messages still get through
Bookings and embeds	Calendars and third-party forms load, and are allowed by your security policy
Privacy	The policy names any new tool that now handles this data

On our own new site we submitted each kind of form and confirmed that a lead came through. Do this on staging, then again on the live site on launch day. A form that works on staging can fail on the live domain, because of a domain allow list or a security rule.

Tracking: see the hit arrive

Set up tracking on the new site to match what you measure today, then check that the data actually arrives. A tag being present proves very little.

- ✓ List the events and goals you report on today, and rebuild each. Our post on tracking setup has a starting list.
- ✓ Open the real-time or debug view and do each action: send a form, click to book a call.
- ✓ Check any thank-you page that a goal or ad conversion depends on.
- ✓ Cookie consent works: nothing fires before the visitor agrees, where your rules require that.
- ✓ Ads, heatmaps, chat and other scripts are added on purpose, not copied across out of habit.
- ✓ Note in analytics the date of the move, so later readers can see it.

A real example from our own build: our custom events looked fine on the page, but they were missing a `send_to` setting, and without it they never left the page. We only caught that by watching what was actually sent. So capture the hits, and look at them.

Speed, mobile and the rest

You moved partly to be better, so check that you are. Run Lighthouse on your top templates on mobile, and compare with your before picture. Check your main pages on a real phone. Then go through the rest of the things the old site quietly did:

- ✓ The 404 page is designed, and links to useful pages.
- ✓ Search, login, gated content and members areas all work.
- ✓ Connected tools, such as your CRM and email, are connected to the new forms.
- ✓ Legal pages are up to date, and name your new host and tools.
- ✓ Editors can publish a page on their own. Try it, with a real editor.

Our website launch checklist and Webflow SEO checklist go deeper on each area. If you would rather hand this part over, it is the core of our migration work, and SEO and analytics services cover the specialist parts.

DONE WHEN

The comparison crawl has no unexplained differences, every form has landed in the right place, and every event has been seen arriving.

TAKEAWAYS

- Keep tier A copy word for word through the move. Improve it later.
- Compare old and new by crawl. Any difference nobody chose is a bug.
- Plan how to remove staging blocks before launch, not on the day.
- Send every form for real, on staging and again on the live site.
- Watch tracking hits arrive. A tag on the page proves very little.

CHAPTER 5 OF 6

Launch day order

05

The order matters, and launch day is no time to work it out. A run sheet from a week before to the last check, with an owner and a proof for every step, plus a rollback rule.

The short answer

Launch on a quiet weekday morning with everyone reachable, and follow a written sheet in order: final content, then new site live with blocks removed, then redirects, then checks against your whole old URL list, then the new sitemap in Search Console. Do not start at 5pm on a Friday. Then keep the old site available until you are sure you do not need it.

The exact steps depend on your host and on whether your domain changes, so adapt the sheet below before the day. It follows Google's site move guide and guide to moves without URL changes, with what we add from our own projects.

The week before

Most launch-day trouble is decided here.

WHEN	STEP	OWNER	PROOF
7+ days	Lower the DNS TTL to a few hours, as Google suggests for host moves	Whoever holds DNS	Record shows the new TTL
7 days	Confirm access: DNS, domain, hosting, Search Console, analytics, CMS	Project lead	Each login tested
5 days	Pick the day, and warn sales, support and anyone running ads	Project lead	Note sent
3 days	Content freeze starts, final crawl of the old site	Content owner	New rows in the map, if any
2 days	Final redirect map signed off, and loaded where you can	SEO owner	Dated copy saved
1 day	Back up the old site, and test the rollback steps on paper	Developer	Backup opens, steps written
1 day	Tell your host to expect more crawling if the site is large	Developer	Reply from host

Google notes that crawling usually gets heavier after a move with new URLs, so check your server can handle it. On a host move with no URL change, it says to expect a temporary dip, then a steady rise over the following days.

Pick the time

A good slot has three things: low traffic, your whole team around, and working hours left in the day to fix things. For most B2B sites, a Tuesday or Wednesday morning in your main market works well. Avoid the day before a holiday, the day of a campaign, and any time your developer is about to get on a plane.

Name one person who makes the call on launch day. Others report to that person. A rollback decision by group chat takes too long.

The run sheet

Print this, or paste it into a shared doc. Do the steps in order, and tick each one off with the time beside it. Adapt the wording to your host.

#	STEP	PROOF IT WORKED
1	Publish last content changes to the new site	Latest posts present
2	Remove `noindex` and staging passwords, using your list	Crawl of tier A shows no `noindex`
3	Put the final robots.txt in place	File reads as planned
4	Point the domain at the new host, or turn on the new routes	DNS checked from several places
5	SSL works on every host version	No certificate warnings, on `www` and non-`www`
6	Turn on redirects	Tier A old URLs land on the right page by hand
7	Crawl your whole old URL list	Every row returns the expected 301, or 404 or 410, with no chains or loops
8	Crawl the new site	All 200, self-canonical, no internal redirects
9	URL Inspection on key pages in Search Console	Google can fetch them, with the expected canonical
10	Send every form on the live domain	Messages land where they should
11	Watch tracking in real time	Page views and events arrive
12	Check on a real phone, with no cache	Pages look right
13	Submit the new sitemap in Search Console	Status reads as submitted, and is read
14	If the domain changed: run Change of Address, on the old property	Tool confirms the request
15	Update ads, email footers, social profiles and link-in-bio pages	Each one clicked
16	Tell the team it is live, and how to report a problem	Message sent

A note on step 14. The Change of Address help page says it is for moving from one domain or subdomain to another. It is not for a change of platform on the same domain, moving from `http` to `https`, or a change between `www` and non-`www`. It asks you to have redirects in place first, to own both properties in Search Console, and to verify every subdomain version of the old domain. The notice lasts 180 days.

Rollback: decide before you need it

Agree the rule before the day, when everyone is calm. Most problems can be fixed forward. Rollback is for the serious few.

PROBLEM	DO THIS
A few wrong redirects	Fix them. Do not roll back.
One form or event not working	Fix fast. Point the form at a working inbox in the meantime.
Old URLs return 404 in bulk	Fix within the hour if you can. If you cannot, roll back.
The site is down or broken on main pages, and there is no quick fix	Roll back, if DNS is the only change so far.
Whole site blocked by `noindex` or robots.txt	Fix now. This is one setting, and a roll back would be slower.

DECISION RULE

Set a time limit in advance, such as one hour. If your main pages or redirects are still broken when it runs out, go back to the old site, fix it, and try another day. There is no shame in a second try.

Rolling back gets harder with time, because new data lands in the new site. Note any form messages or content created after the switch, so you do not lose them.

Keep the old site alive for now

Do not cancel the old host on launch day. Google's guide to moves without URL changes says to keep the old hosting running until its traffic falls to zero, and until users and Googlebot are getting the right content from the new setup. That is also your rollback route, your record of the old pages, and where you look when someone asks what a page used to say.

If you are changing domains, keep the old one too. The Change of Address help page recommends paying for the old domain for at least a year. Letting it lapse could hand your old URLs to someone else.

The first hours after launch

Stay close for the rest of the day. Do not schedule other work, and hold off on any new changes to the site.

- ✓ Re-run the old URL crawl a few hours later, in case cache or rules changed.
- ✓ Open the Pages and Sitemaps reports in Search Console, knowing that it can take days to show much.
- ✓ Check for real form messages, and that they reach the right person.
- ✓ Check error logs if your host has them, and look for a spike in 404s.
- ✓ Ask support and sales to tell you about anything odd.
- ✓ Save the live redirect list with the date.

DONE WHEN

The old URL list is clean, forms are landing, tracking is arriving, and the sitemap is submitted. Then go home. Chapter 6 picks up from here.

TAKEAWAYS

- Lower DNS TTL at least a week ahead, if the host is changing.
- Launch on a quiet weekday morning, with one person making the calls.
- Follow the sheet in order, with proof beside each step.
- Run your whole old URL list against the live site.
- Set a rollback rule and a time limit before the day. Keep the old host until its traffic reaches zero.

CHAPTER 6 OF 6

The first 30 days

06

Expect some movement, and watch for what is not normal. A simple check schedule, a table of symptoms and likely causes, and what to leave alone while it settles.

The short answer

For 30 days, check a small set of reports on a schedule, fix what is broken quickly, and do not make big changes. Some movement in rankings is normal. Google's site move guide says to expect temporary fluctuation, and that a small to medium site can take a few weeks for most pages to move, with larger sites taking longer. Your job is to tell the normal wobble from a real fault. Faults usually show up as errors, not just as lower numbers.

Nobody can promise where your rankings land after a move, and be careful of anyone who does. What you can control is that every old URL has a good answer, and that the new pages are at least as good.

The 30-day schedule

Put these in a calendar with a name beside each. Fifteen minutes is usually enough for a check, unless it finds something.

WHEN	CHECK	LOOKING FOR
Day 1 to 3	Old URL crawl, 404 report, forms, tracking	Anything broken from launch
Day 3 to 7	Search Console Pages and Sitemaps, server logs if you have them	Crawl errors, and Google finding the new URLs
Week 1	Leads and sales against your before picture	A drop in what actually pays
Week 2	Performance by page for tier A, against the same period before	Pages that dropped alone, when others did not
Week 3	New URLs picking up impressions and clicks, old URLs fading	The handover moving along
Week 4	Full comparison with the before picture, and a written summary	What is done, and what stays open

Compare with the same weeks last year if your business is seasonal. Comparing with last month can make a normal dip look like a disaster.

What normal looks like

A lot of what you see in the first weeks looks scary and is expected.

- ✓ Rankings go up and down for a while, as Google sorts out the new URLs.
- ✓ Old URLs still show in search results for a time, then fade.

- Both old and new URLs appear together in reports.
- The indexed count on the new sitemap rises slowly.
- If you kept your old sitemap in Search Console, it warns about redirects. Google says you can ignore these warnings.
- Googlebot crawls more than usual, on a move with new URLs.

Google says the move is complete only when it has visited each old and new URL at least once. Rarely crawled pages are the last to catch up, so a long tail takes time. Search Console data also lags by a few days, so do not read too much into a single day.

Symptom, cause, fix

When something is wrong, it usually falls into one of these rows.

WHAT YOU SEE	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
A spike in 404s	Missed URLs or wrong rules	Add them to the map. Look at where the 404s came from.
One page fell, others did not	Lost content, title or links, or a poor redirect target	Compare with your saved snapshot. Restore what went missing.
A whole template fell	Template-level issue: `noindex`, canonical, or content hidden behind scripts	Inspect one URL with URL Inspection, then fix the template.
New pages "Crawled, currently not indexed"	Thin pages, or simply early days	Wait a little, then improve the page and its internal links.
Google picks a different canonical	Mixed signals: duplicates, sitemap, internal links or redirects that disagree	Make all of them point at the same URL.
Traffic steady, leads down	A form, a thank-you page or tracking is broken	Send a real form. Then check the event.
Traffic down, leads steady	Could be low-intent pages, or measurement	Check tracking and consent first, then pages.
Everything flat for weeks, no new URLs indexed	robots.txt or firewall blocking crawlers	Test in URL Inspection, and check your host logs.
Slower than expected	Scripts added late, or big images	Run Lighthouse by template and compare.

FIRST MOVE

Before you change anything, open one affected URL in URL Inspection and read what Google saw. Most problems become obvious right there.

Clean up links you control

Redirects keep old links working, but a direct link is better, and these are in your hands. Google recommends updating links you can reach.

- ✓ Internal links on the new site, including menus, footers and old blog posts. A crawl lists any that still go through a redirect.
- ✓ Your profiles: LinkedIn, X, Clutch, partner directories, app listings.
- ✓ Ads, email signatures, automated emails and PDFs.
- ✓ The top sites linking to you. Ask only the ones with the strongest links, from your backlink list, with a short and friendly note.

What to leave alone

Give the site time to settle. If you change everything at once now, you lose your ability to see what caused what.

- ✓ No new URL changes. Do not "tidy up" addresses you just moved.
- ✓ No big copy rewrites on tier A pages for a few weeks.
- ✓ No major design changes or new templates.
- ✓ No removing redirects. See the next section.
- ✓ No removing the old host until its traffic is gone.

Small fixes and new blog posts are fine. Keep a dated log of changes, so you can match them to anything you see in the reports. That log is worth more than it sounds, as our post on what breaks after launch explains.

How long to keep things

These are the dates that get forgotten. Put them on the calendar now.

ITEM	HOW LONG	SOURCE
Redirects	As long as you can, generally at least a year. Consider keeping them for good.	Google site move guide
Change of Address	The notice runs for 180 days. Keep redirects for at least that long, and longer if the old URLs still get search traffic.	Search Console help
Old domain	Keep paying for it for at least a year	Search Console help
Old host	Until traffic to it reaches zero	Google, no URL changes guide
Old sitemap	Can be removed once the new one is submitted, or kept for a while to watch its count fall	Google site move guide

Our advice is simple: never remove redirects unless you have a reason. People keep old links in bookmarks, emails and documents for years, and a rule costs very little to keep.

Close the project

At day 30, write one page and share it. It is the end of the project, and the start of normal work.

- ✓ What moved, on what date, with the dated redirect map attached.

- How clicks, leads and sales compare with the before picture, with the season in mind.
- What is still open, and who owns it.
- Who now owns the site, the redirects and the reports.
- Which improvements were held back, such as the copy rewrite. Now is the time to plan them.

On our own projects, the first 30 days after launch include support for safe changes: copy, image, colour and link updates, and fixes to what we built. If you want someone to keep watching after that, our care plan or Astro care plan covers ongoing work. See pricing for how that works.

TAKEAWAYS

- Check on a schedule, with a name beside each check, for 30 days.
- Rankings move for a while. Errors are the sign of a real fault, so hunt those.
- Compare leads and sales, not only traffic, and account for the season.
- Do not stack big changes on a move that is still settling.
- Keep redirects as long as you can, at least a year, and never let the old domain lapse.

QUESTIONS

Questions people ask.

How long does a site move take?

Google says a small to medium site can take a few weeks for most pages to move in search, and larger sites take longer. The project before that depends on the size of the site and how much is changing. Our process page shows how we run a build.

Will I lose rankings when I move my site?

Expect some movement for a while. Google says to expect temporary fluctuation during a move. Nobody can guarantee where rankings land. What you can do is keep URLs where possible, carry over content and on-page SEO, and redirect every old URL straight to the right new page.

Do I need redirects if my URLs stay the same?

No rule is needed for a URL that stays exactly the same. You still need to check host versions, such as www and trailing slashes, and any old redirects you already had.

Should I redesign and move at the same time?

If you can, split them. When everything changes at once, you cannot tell what caused a drop. A common way to do both is to keep URLs and core copy the same through the move, and improve the copy later.

How long should I keep my redirects?

As long as you can. Google says generally at least one year, and suggests thinking about keeping them for good, for the sake of people with old links.

Do I need the Change of Address tool?

Only when moving from one domain or subdomain to another. It is not for a platform change on the same domain, for http to https, or for www to non-www.

Can I do this myself?

Yes, on a small site with a careful owner. This guide is written so you can. For a large site, or one that earns most of its leads from search, get help with the redirect map and the launch. Our free tool covers the first draft of the map.

Keep going

- Redirect map tool
- Redirect map template
- Website launch checklist
- WordPress to Webflow
- Wix to Webflow
- Squarespace to Webflow
- Webflow to Astro
- WordPress to Astro
- Move a site in stages
- What breaks after launch
- All our services

Planning a move? Book a free 20 minute call

Kookies. www.kookies.io. hello@kookies.io