Website redesign SEO checklist

- A redesign costs search traffic where it changes what Google knew
- Addresses, titles, words, links and crawl rules
- Change as little as you need, and tell Google about the rest

Before the build

- List the pages that bring clicks: Performance report, Pages tab
- For each: address, title, main heading, what it says
- Add images and PDFs that get traffic
- Keep your Search Console proof file for the new site
- Save your best pages in the Wayback Machine

During the build

- Keep every address you can
- Match each moved address to its closest new page
- Do not send many old addresses to the home page
- Merged pages: redirect all of them to the merged page
- Dropped pages with no match: let them return not found

Redirects

- Use a permanent redirect: a 301 or a 308
- Point straight at the final page, no chains
- Update old redirects from earlier rebuilds
- Keep them generally at least 1 year

Launch day

- Remove the test site's robots.txt block and noindex rules
- Switch on the redirects and test them
- Each new page names its own address as canonical
- Change your own links to the new addresses
- Submit the new sitemap in Search Console
- New domain only: Change of Address for every version

The first weeks

- Sitemaps: new addresses fill up over time
- Page indexing: watch for a rise in Not found (404)
- Page with redirect is expected for old addresses
- Performance: old page clicks fall, new page clicks rise

Old SEO faults

- Fix one during the move only if the move touches that page
- Leave the rest until the new site settles
- One change at a time, so a drop has one cause