UniqueStoreMarket.com

DIGITAL & TECH | PROFESSIONAL SKILL

How to Build a Website From Scratch

Go from no website at all to a live, working site of your own — built step by step, with decisions you can explain, not copied from a template you don't understand.

5-day guide · 5 chapters · Self-Directed Learning Framework

Read this guide online, or browse dozens more, at
uniquestoremarket.com

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Every guide on this site is produced with the Self-Directed Learning Framework: instead of an article that explains a topic at you, it turns the topic into a structure you work through — each chapter with one outcome, a starting action under twelve minutes, the minimum you actually need to know, a worked example, a checklist, and exercises using your own situation. No filler, no re-reading required.

WHAT'S INSIDE

01	Choosing Your Domain Name and the Right Platform	Day 1 · 20 min
02	Structuring Your Site: Pages, Navigation, and What Goes Where	Day 2 · 20 min
03	Writing Content That Gets Read, Not Skipped	Day 3 · 20 min
04	Design Basics That Make a DIY Site Look Professional	Day 4 · 15 min
05	Testing, Launching, and the First Week	Day 5 · 15 min

CHAPTER 1 OF 5 · DAY 1 · 20 MIN

Choosing Your Domain Name and the Right Platform

> **Outcome:** "I have a domain name shortlisted and a platform decision I can actually defend, instead of picking whatever a YouTube video happened to use."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

Write down three possible domain names right now, each under 15 characters, with no hyphens and no numbers — then say each one out loud. If you stumble saying it, cross it off.

The minimum you need to know

A domain name is the address people type or click to reach your site; a platform is the tool you use to actually build and host it — these are two separate decisions, and conflating them is the single most common beginner mistake. For the domain: stick to `.com` unless you have a specific reason not to (it's still what people assume by default), keep it short and easy to say over the phone, and avoid anything that's ambiguous when spoken aloud (hyphens and unusual spellings cause this). For the platform, there are really three categories: a visual website builder (Wix, Squarespace and similar — drag-and-drop, hosting included, fastest to a working site, least flexible later), a CMS like WordPress (more setup, far more flexibility and plugins, a small learning curve), or hand-coded HTML (full control, requires knowing or learning to code — not the default choice for a first site). Choose based on one honest question: do you want this live this week, or are you building a skill you'll reuse? The first answer points to a builder; the second points to WordPress or code.

Worked example

Worked example: a first-time builder's decision. Someone with no coding background, wanting a site live this week for a side project, shortlists "lentilandthyme.com" (short, easy to say, no hyphen) and picks a visual builder over WordPress — accepting less long-term flexibility in exchange for not needing to learn hosting, updates, or plugin security, which WordPress would require managing.

Checklist

- [ ] Three domain candidates written down, each tested by saying it out loud
- [ ] Domain is under 15 characters, no hyphens, no numbers
- [ ] `.com` checked first unless there's a specific reason to use another ending
- [ ] Platform decision made using the "live this week vs. building a skill" test
- [ ] Chosen platform's free trial or free tier actually opened, not just read about

Exercises

1. Check your top domain candidate's availability on any registrar's search box (no need to buy yet).
2. Write one sentence explaining why you picked your platform — if you can't, revisit the decision.

CHAPTER 2 OF 5 · DAY 2 · 20 MIN

Structuring Your Site: Pages, Navigation, and What Goes Where

> **Outcome:** "I have a simple page plan — what pages exist, what's on each one, and how they connect — before I've designed a single pixel."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

On a blank sheet of paper, draw one box per page you think you need, and connect them with lines showing which ones link to which. Don't open your website builder yet.

The minimum you need to know

Almost every small site needs the same handful of pages: a Home page (what this is and what to do next), an About page (who's behind it, why it exists), a page for the actual offer (Services, Products, Portfolio — whatever applies), and a Contact page. Everything else — a blog, an FAQ, testimonials, a store — is an addition, not a foundation, and adding them before the core four exist is how sites end up half-finished. Navigation should mirror this: a top menu with four to six items maximum, in the order visitors actually think (Home, then About or Services depending on what matters more to your visitor, then Contact last since it's the destination, not the start). Every page should have one clear next action — a link or button telling the visitor what to do once they've read it — pages that just end are dead ends.

Worked example

Worked example: a four-page starting structure. Home → one sentence on what this is, a photo, and a button to Services. Services → three offerings listed plainly, each linking to Contact. About → two paragraphs and a real photo, linking to Contact. Contact → a form or a clear email address, nothing else competing for attention on that page.

Checklist

- [ ] Page map sketched on paper before touching the website builder
- [ ] Core four pages identified: Home, About, the offer page, Contact
- [ ] Navigation menu limited to 4–6 items
- [ ] Every page has one clear next action for the visitor
- [ ] Extra pages (blog, FAQ, store) deliberately deferred, not forgotten

Exercises

1. Finalize your four core pages and write one line describing each page's single job.
2. For each page, write down the one button or link it should end with.

CHAPTER 3 OF 5 · DAY 3 · 20 MIN

Writing Content That Gets Read, Not Skipped

> **Outcome:** "I can write a homepage and page copy that a visitor actually reads in the first ten seconds, instead of a wall of text they skip past."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

Write one sentence, in plain language, answering: "what is this, and who is it for?" That sentence becomes your homepage headline.

The minimum you need to know

Visitors scan before they read — most decide whether to stay within the first ten seconds, based on the headline and whatever's immediately visible, not the paragraph below it. A working headline states what the thing is and who it's for, in plain words, with no clever wordplay that requires decoding ("Smarter spaces for smaller homes" beats a pun that needs a second read). Below the headline, a one-sentence subhead adds the detail the headline couldn't fit, then a single clear call-to-action button — one, not three competing ones. Body copy should be broken into short paragraphs (two to three sentences), with the most important information first, not saved for a reveal at the end — nobody scrolls to the bottom of a page they haven't been convinced to read yet.

Worked example

Worked example: before and after a homepage headline. Before: "Welcome to our world of possibilities." (says nothing). After: "Custom dog leashes, handmade in small batches." (says exactly what this is). The second version lets a visitor decide in two seconds whether to keep reading — the first forces them to keep scrolling just to find out.

Checklist

- [ ] Homepage headline states what this is and who it's for, in plain language
- [ ] One-sentence subhead adds detail without repeating the headline
- [ ] Exactly one primary call-to-action button per page, not several competing ones
- [ ] Body paragraphs kept to two or three sentences
- [ ] Most important information placed first, not buried at the bottom

Exercises

1. Write your homepage headline and subhead, then read them aloud to someone who's never heard about your site and ask what they think it is.
2. Rewrite your longest paragraph so far into two shorter ones.

Design Basics That Make a DIY Site Look Professional

> **Outcome:** "I can apply a small, consistent set of design rules that make my site look deliberately built, not thrown together from a template."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

Pick exactly two fonts (one for headings, one for body text) and one accent color, and write them down before changing anything else on the site.

The minimum you need to know

Most DIY sites look amateur for the same three reasons, all fixable without any design training: too many fonts (stick to two, max three), too many colors competing for attention (one neutral background, one text color, one accent color used sparingly for buttons and links — not five different colors), and not enough whitespace (cramming content edge-to-edge instead of giving it room to breathe makes a page feel cluttered even when the content itself is fine). Images matter too: use consistent sizing and cropping across a page rather than mixing wildly different aspect ratios, and never stretch a low-resolution image to fill a space — a smaller, sharp image beats a larger blurry one every time.

Worked example

Worked example: a three-rule design pass. Before: five fonts, a background image behind every section, text touching the edges of the screen. After: two fonts, a plain background with one accent color used only on buttons, and consistent padding around every block of text. Nothing else changed — the content is identical — but the second version reads as intentional.

Checklist

- [ ] Exactly two fonts chosen and applied consistently across every page
- [ ] One accent color chosen and used only for buttons/links, not scattered everywhere
- [ ] Consistent spacing/padding applied around text blocks
- [ ] Images cropped to a consistent size and ratio where they appear together
- [ ] No stretched or blurry images anywhere on the site

Exercises

1. Go through every page and remove any font or color that isn't one of your chosen two fonts / one accent color.
2. Find and replace, or crop, any image that looks stretched or low-resolution.

CHAPTER 5 OF 5 · DAY 5 · 15 MIN

Testing, Launching, and the First Week

> **Outcome:** "I've actually tested the site before telling anyone about it, and I know what to check in the first week it's live."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

Open your site on your phone right now, even if you built it on a computer — most first visitors will be on mobile, and this is the fastest way to catch an obvious problem.

The minimum you need to know

Before launch, click every single link and button on every page — broken links are the single most common last-minute embarrassment, and they're invisible unless you actually click through rather than just look. Check the site on both a phone and a computer, since layouts that look fine on one can break on the other. Confirm every form (contact forms especially) actually sends and that you receive the result — a form that silently fails is worse than no form at all, because visitors think they've reached you. Once live, set up basic analytics (most platforms have a built-in option) so you're not flying blind, and in the first week, check daily for broken links, misspellings someone else spotted, and whether the one clear call-to-action is actually getting clicked — if it isn't, that's a sign to revisit Chapter 3's headline work, not to add more pages.

Worked example

Worked example: a pre-launch checklist run. Clicking through all four pages reveals one dead link in the footer and a contact form that submits but never arrives in the inbox (a setup error, caught only by sending a real test message). Both get fixed before the first visitor ever sees the site — exactly the kind of problem invisible from just reading the page, only found by clicking.

Checklist

- [ ] Every link and button clicked and confirmed working
- [ ] Site checked on both phone and computer
- [ ] Contact form tested with a real submission, confirmed it arrives
- [ ] Basic analytics turned on before announcing the site
- [ ] A daily check planned for the first week after launch

Exercises

1. Click every link on every page of your site and note anything broken.
2. Send yourself a real test submission through your contact form and confirm it arrives.
3. Write down the one metric (clicks on your main button, form submissions, visits) you'll check daily in week one.

MORE FROM THIS LIBRARY

This guide is one of dozens of free, self-paced guides at uniquestoremarket.com/library.html. Every guide follows the same structure and is produced with the Self-Directed Learning Framework — see the prompt behind it at uniquestoremarket.com/craft.html.