

.au

Build a website
for your small
business.



About this handbook

This handbook will step you through the process of planning and creating a basic, brochure-style website that you can easily maintain, even if you have entry-level digital skills.

The DIY guide does not detail how to use specific tools or platforms – the providers of those tools are best-placed to cover that. Instead, we'll look at the types of tools available to help you decide which solution might work best for your website.

You can start simple and, as your business grows and evolves, you'll have a solid base on which to build.

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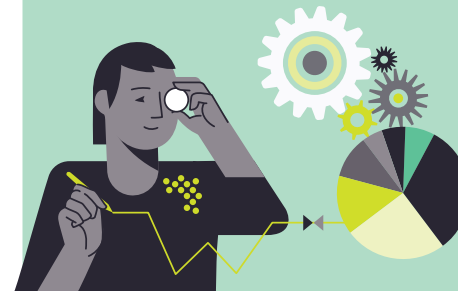


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Why build a website for your small business?

Successful businesses today require a strong digital presence. A custom website using your own .au domain name is a great way to anchor your enduring online presence and build a trusted hub for your current and potential customers.

Social media platforms have made it easier than ever to start building a presence quickly with little upfront time or effort. However, relying solely on social media for your business' online presence comes with trade-offs:

- Building, reaching and maintaining an audience relies on constantly creating new content to stay visible
- Algorithm changes can affect your brand's visibility
- It can be extremely hard to bring an audience along with you if you close a social media account down
- You have less control over the content you post to social media channels.



It's not hard, it's just new

We've learned from talking to Aussie business owners there's a perception that anything less than a perfect website isn't good enough. In our view, that's just not true.

The good news is, it's easier than ever to build a simple website, even if you've never built one before.

Three in four Australian consumers will only purchase from a business online if it has a website.



Your address online: Get your .au domain name



The first step in your website project is to secure your .au domain name.

A domain name is a human-readable internet address. It's what you see in the address bar in your web browser, and a way people find websites on the internet.



Learn more about domain names and how they work.

auda.org.au/dns-explained

People sometimes confuse domain names for websites.

Think of your website as the shopfront people visit, and your domain name as its address.







.au domain names

.au is the country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) for Australia. A .au domain name is a trusted signal that you have a verified connection to Australia. To hold a .au domain name you need to provide information verifying your connection to Australia, such as a valid ABN or a form of ID.

This information is validated when you first register and when you renew your domain name. It's a big part of why .au is so trusted: you can trust that the holder of a .au domain has a verified, credible connection to Australia.

Choose the best .au

Within the .au domain there are different namespaces, each with their own purpose:

 com.au	For businesses with a connection to Australia
 .au direct	For individuals and organisations with a connection to Australia
 net.au	For businesses with a connection to Australia (often used by technology-focused companies)
 org.au	For not-for-profits and eligible social enterprises registered in Australia
 id.au	For Australian individuals
 asn.au	For unincorporated associations

For a business, we recommend registering a domain name ending in either com.au or .au direct (e.g. getyour.au).

.au namespace options for other entities can be found at auda.org.au.

Choose a domain name provider

.au domain names are registered through companies offering registration services – usually referred to as registrars, or domain name providers.

There are many different domain name providers you can use to register your domain name. When choosing a provider you should consider:

- Your budget
- The level of support you may need
- The tools and products they offer which are relevant to you.

Many domain name providers offer different packages with inclusions aimed at businesses in different stages.

You do not need to have all your services – such as domain name, hosting or web platforms – with the one provider, although it can sometimes be easier if you do.

Explore domain provider options by searching for a .au domain name at getyour.au.

Cost of a .au domain name

On average, you can expect to pay around \$20 per year (as at May 2026) for your .au domain name.

Providers often run promotions offering significantly lower domain name prices for the first year of a multi-year registration.

Why choose a .au domain name?

.au domain names are highly trusted by Australian and global internet users.

Our research shows:

- .au domains names are well recognised by consumers
- com.au is the most trusted type of domain name in Australia
- Half of Australian consumers will only buy from a website with a .au domain name
- Nearly half of Aussie consumers will not buy from a business that only has a social media presence.

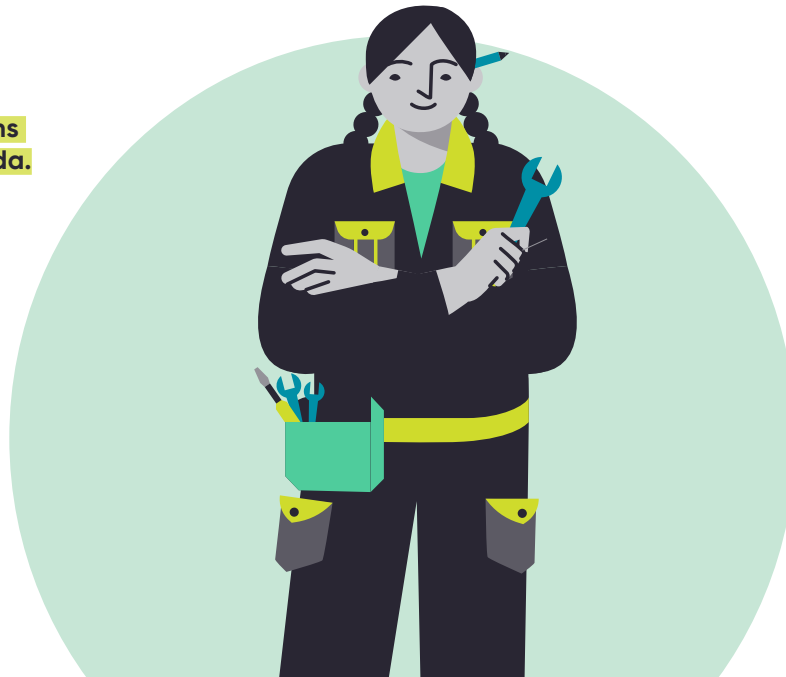
.au is a marker of trust online that shows your business is:

- Trustworthy and secure
- Australian.

Learn more why .au domains are so highly trusted at auda.org.au/whyau.



auda.org.au/whyau



Choose the right .au domain name

The right domain name can become a key part of your brand, so putting some thought into it early is a smart move.

Choose a domain name that:

- Reflects you, your organisation or the services you offer – think of it as a distinctive brand asset like your logo, you want customers to be able to associate it with your business
- Is short and simple
- Avoids hyphens and numbers – these can make it more difficult for people to get right
- Can be easily understood when said out loud
- Doesn't infringe on a registered trade mark.



Once you've chosen your name, check it's available by searching on getyour.au.

Registering your .au domain name

Once you've selected your preferred domain name and confirmed it's available, it's time to register it via your chosen domain name provider.

You'll need to verify your identity with your selected provider, so make sure you have relevant documents to hand.

Remember: to keep your .au domain name, you need to be eligible for the whole licence period. Make sure your ABN and business registrations are up-to-date.

Your domain name will be ready for use shortly after you've completed the registration and checkout process.

Well done, you're on your way to a website.

Plan your website content

Why start with content?

Before jumping into building your website, we recommend you plan out the content you want your audience to see. Relevant and considered content helps customers understand what you do, builds trust, and improves your visibility in search engines and AI-generated results. Ensuring you have a clear idea of the content you want enables you to make informed decisions about your website style and build.

There are three important questions to answer to help you understand what content you need and how to plan your website for your potential customers.

Who is my website for?

Consider the audience for your website:

- Individuals, businesses, or both?
- Where are they based?
- What is the best way for them to contact you?



What does my audience need?

When it comes to needing the products or services your business offers, what does your audience think about?

- What motivates them to seek your services or product?
- What questions do they ask before buying?
- What information do they need to trust you (e.g. pricing, testimonials, credentials etc.)?
- What concerns or barriers might you be able to address upfront (e.g. by providing FAQs, a video message, or a case study)?
- What actions do you want them to undertake on your site (e.g. seek a quote, make a purchase, book a service, subscribe or call you)?

What do other similar businesses do?

Researching other similar businesses' websites can be useful to help you get started with planning possible content for your website.

Organising your content

After researching and deciding what information you would like on your website, you then need to organise it in a way that will be helpful to your audience, so they can easily find what they need to know.

Some quick tips:

- Group related content into logical sections (e.g. About us, Services, FAQs, Contact) – these might be separate pages or sections on a single page
- Use clear, descriptive headings
- Keep website navigation clear, simple and intuitive
- Understand what other assets you need to have and how they fit into the rest of your content, such as images of products or your store, or PDFs of menus
- Don't forget to add links to your social media profiles.

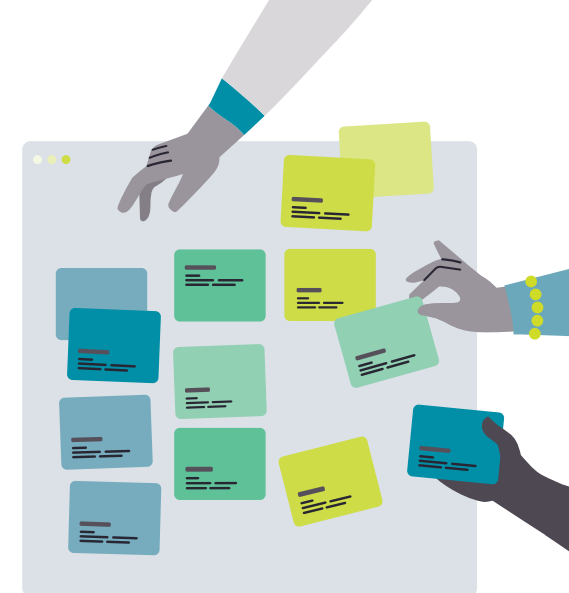
Writing website content

Once you have an idea of your audience, what they need, and how you'd like to present it, it's time to start writing.

Make your content easy to scan

Reading text online is different to reading printed formats, especially when reading on a mobile device. People tend to quickly scan pages trying to pick out key information. With this in mind:

- Put the most important information first
- Break up longer sections of text with images, headings and bullet point lists
- Make sure your calls to action like "Buy now", "Contact me" or "Add to cart" are clear and visible.



Images

Gather and organise your images in this planning stage and decide where they best match your website's content.

You could also consider stock imagery if you do not have images or want to take them yourself.

If your business offers something that's difficult to represent visually, think about what you would like your customers to experience or feel when engaging with your business.



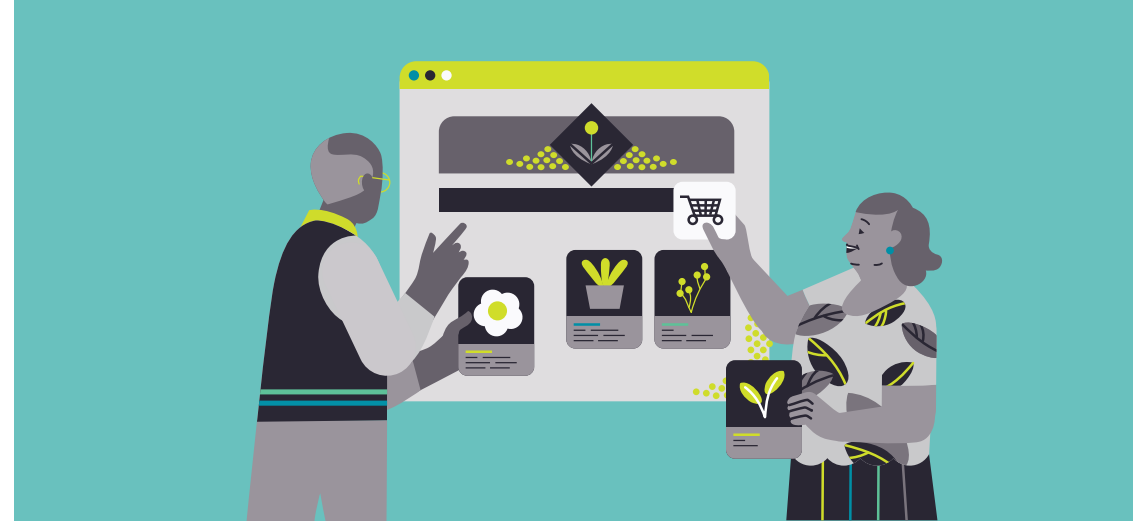
AI tools for content generation

If creating written content isn't your strong suit, AI tools could help get you started.

If you choose to use AI tools, it's important that the output is considered a starting point for your business. Always review and tailor AI-generated content to make sure it's accurate, specific and relevant to your customers and your business.

If you're using AI to generate website content you should:

- Be specific about your business type and audience
- Mention your location if you serve a local area
- Ask for short drafts - you can always expand later
- Review and edit the output to make it sound like you
- Be privacy conscious: don't put private or confidential information about you, your business or your customers into AI tools and assume that anything you put into an AI prompt is publicly available.



Build and publish your site

Once you've planned your content, it's time to build your site. There are many options and approaches that vary in cost, complexity and support. There's no "best" way to build a website - it's a choice you make, informed by your skill level, budget and time available.

Please note: any brands or companies we list below are not endorsements. They are illustrative only.

Website builders and design platforms

These range from simple "drag and drop" editors (e.g. Weebly, VIPsites) to standalone design platforms (e.g. Squarespace, Canva) with a vast array of templates and additional tools to choose from.

Some business-focused platforms also offer website builders in addition to their core service such as payments or marketing options (e.g. Shopify, Square, HubSpot).

AI tools

Website builders are increasingly using AI to assist at every stage of the website build process. Some of them will help you search for domain names and some allow you to build an entire site from a text prompt. Others integrate AI tools throughout their platforms to assist with content, branding and image generation.

Website builder costs

The price of website builder tools varies depending on the option you choose. Prices listed are indicative as of May 2026.

Type	Examples	Expect to pay
Simple website builder	VIPsites, Weebly	Free to ~\$10/month
Design platform	Canva, Squarespace	~\$20/mth
Business platforms	Square Online, HubSpot	~\$30 - \$50/month

Pick a website builder

It can be hard to decide on a tool in a category this broad, but there are some ways to narrow the choice down. Keep in mind the best tool is the one you'll actually use.

Use free trials

Most tools will offer a free trial period. Pick a couple of tools you've heard of or like the look of and spend 15 minutes clicking around. Does it have templates you like? Can you easily add your content? Does it make sense to you?

Keep it simple

Be realistic about the options you need at this stage and prioritise ease-of-use over features that sound appealing but aren't necessary.

Website templates

Most website builder tools offer a choice of templates that determine basic layout and look and feel for your site. Some solutions offer vast galleries of templates which can make it difficult to choose. Keeping it simple is important.

1) Choose the simplest template that suits your content

Avoid complex layouts with lots of moving parts. They may look great but they're harder to edit and easier to break.

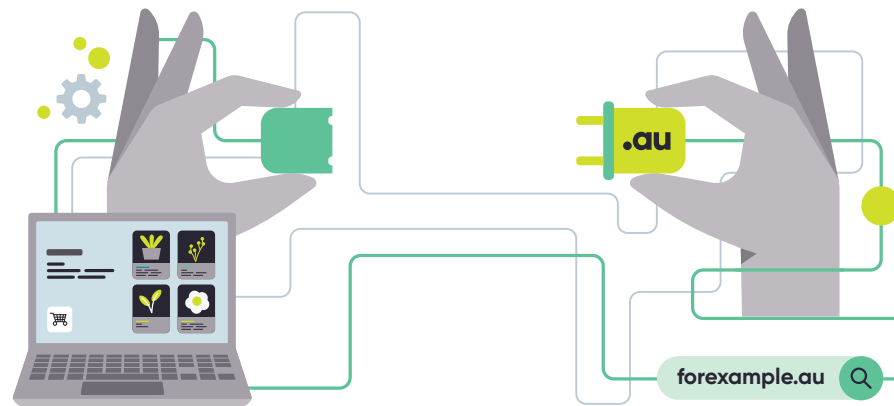
2) Prioritise readability and mobile layout

Make sure the template looks great on a phone:

- Clear, succinct headings
 - Easy-to-read text and colour combinations
 - Highly visible buttons such as Call, Email, or Book Now.
- If it's hard to use on mobile, it's not the right template.

3) Pick a template that needs minimal changes to look good

A good beginner template should work with your content as-is. If you need to redesign every section, swap lots of colours, or rewrite everything to make it look right, choose a different template.



Connecting your .au domain name

How you get your domain name to direct users to your website will vary based on the website building solution you choose.

There are typically two parts to the process:

- Update settings in the admin panel of your website builder
- Make changes to your domain name's DNS records.

Your website builder will have detailed instructions on this process.

Build and test

Throughout the build process, take the time to test your site on different devices. The same site can look quite different on phones, tablets and laptops.

Most tools offer templates with "responsive" designs meaning they usually work across all kinds of devices, but it pays to check how things look on multiple devices and tweak your site until you're comfortable.

Don't be afraid to ask a friend or colleague for a second opinion. It always helps to have a different opinion on a website build to spot any issues like spelling errors or broken links.

Once you're happy with the testing, hit the "publish" button. Your website is live. Congratulations!



Keeping your site secure

You don't need deep technical knowledge to keep a basic website secure.

If you've built your site using a web design platform or a registrar's website builder, the tool will manage many website elements for you – but there are a few simple but important things you should do to keep your site and business secure.

Keep your accounts secure

Your website setup may involve services from different providers. Keeping accounts for those services as secure as possible is crucial to keep your website secure.

Passwords

Ensuring strong password hygiene across all your services is one of the simplest and most effective security steps you can take.

- Don't reuse passwords from social media or other services
- Avoid obvious words like your business name or "Password123"
- Use passphrases (e.g. a combination of random words)
- Consider using a password manager to generate and store passwords securely.

Enable multi-factor authentication

Multi-factor authentication (MFA) requires a second step when logging in, such as:

- A code sent to your phone
- An authentication app, or
- A security key.

This means that even if someone guesses or steals your password, they can't easily access your account.

Most website and .au domain name providers offer MFA, so enable it immediately if it isn't on by default. For business websites, MFA should be considered essential, not optional.

Limit administrator access

Only give full administrator access to people who truly need it. Fewer high-level logins mean fewer opportunities for mistakes or breaches.

If you use a web hosting or website builder tool where more than one person has access, it's best to make sure:

- Each person has their own login
- Admin permissions are restricted
- Old staff accounts are removed promptly.

Device security

Your website's backend is only as secure as the devices that have access to it, and good security practices need to extend to those as well. Make sure:

- Laptops and phones use strong passcodes
- Devices auto-lock when not in use
- Operating systems and apps are kept up-to-date
- Lost devices can be remotely wiped (if supported)
- If you use public Wi-Fi, avoid logging into sensitive accounts without secure connections.



Find more information
on website security.

auda.org.au/websitesecurity



Actively manage your domain names

Staying on top of domain renewals and keeping contact details up-to-date are essential for maintaining your website.

If you don't renew your domain name and it expires:

- Your website will stop working
- DNS settings may reset
- You could lose control of your domain name.

Domain name providers are required to contact you when your .au domain name renewal date is approaching. Ensure they have your most up-to-date contact details and check you're receiving their messages.

Many domain name registration providers also allow you to enable an auto-renew function which can make things easier. Keeping your payment methods up-to-date is key in this instance.



Find out more about
renewing your .au domain
name at auda.org.au.



auda.org.au



Putting your website to work

Once you've published your website there are some easy things you can do to make your website the hub of your online presence.

Your website and social media should support each other. Your website should be **the one link** you share everywhere. Clear connections between the different elements of your online presence improve your discoverability and can help customers better understand who you are.

Make sure you:

- Put your website link in your social media bios, email signature and other online profiles
- Occasionally link back to your website from social posts
- Share new pages, testimonials, or updates to your website when you add them.

Maintaining your website

For a simple website, maintenance is largely about keeping information accurate and access secure. It won't need constant attention – just occasional check-ins.

Put in a regular calendar reminder to review the content across all your channels (website, social media bios, search engine business profiles) to ensure content is accurate and that all elements of your website still work. Be sure to update your website content if your services change or evolve.

What's next?

Once you're comfortable with your new website, some simple next steps might be:



1. A professional email address

Once your site is live, we recommend you consider setting up a professional email address using your .au domain name.

You don't need a website to do this – you can set email up once you've registered your domain.

Using an email address like you@forexample.au (instead of forexample@gmail.com) builds trust and customer confidence across your business' entire digital experience.

See our guide to setting up a custom .au email address at auda.org.au.



auda.org.au/emailsetup

2. Add more content answering common customer questions

This can be a time saver and help your customers make decisions. This might include adding more information about topics your customers request, such as your services, pricing or your team's capabilities.

3. Add content that builds trust, proof and drives action

Content like testimonials, case studies and galleries of recent work can be useful in convincing new customers to engage your business.

Review your content and make sure you have strong calls-to-action, such as a dedicated "Contact us" page, and clear, simple buttons with labels like "Request a quote", "Call now", "Book online".

4. Web analytics

Web analytics packages give you lots of data about where users of your site are from and what they do or read on your site. This data can give you clues as to how you can improve it and maximise the user experience.

Google Analytics is currently the leading analytics service in this space and it's free to use. Some website platforms offer easy integration of Google Analytics meaning you can get it up and running very easily.

However, website analytics is an entire discipline to itself. It's only useful if you will take the time to interpret the data and action what you learn. As a new starter, you might start by simply monitoring how many users are visiting your site, and where they're from to judge the impact of your efforts.

5. Search engine business profiles

Where relevant, business profiles can help your business appear in online maps and local search. These will often include links to your business, images of your shop, website or menu, and operating hours.

The major search engines may automatically create a business profile for your business using public information.

If one has been created for your business, you can "claim" and verify the profile to take control of it, link it to your website and make sure the details are accurate and maintained.

If there isn't an existing business profile for your business, you can create one for free in each search engine's tools/ecosystem. However, keep in mind that this means additional channels that require monitoring and maintaining.

6. Bookings, payments, eCommerce

You may have built these in already, but if not, they can be added later and potentially be powerful add-ons:

- Online booking (appointments, consultations)
- Lead capture (collecting site users' information for later follow up)
- Deposits or online payments
- Simple product sales (gift cards, vouchers, a small range)
- Quote request workflows.



It's important to be realistic about adding these features as they can add some complexity to website management and cost.

The key question is: will this save time and/or increase business enough to justify the cost and effort to maintain it?

Website setup checklist

1. Secure your domain

- Choose and register a clear, simple .au domain name.

2. Plan your content

- Decide what information your audience needs
- Group content into clear sections (About, Services, FAQs, Contact)

3. Write and prepare

- Write easy-to-scan content with structured headings and calls-to-action
- Gather images and other assets

4. Build your site

- Choose a website builder, an appropriate template and add your content
- Connect your domain name

5. Test and publish

- Test your site on mobile, tablet and desktop
- Check links, spelling and functionality
- Publish your website

6. Keep it secure

- Use strong passwords and enable MFA
- Limit admin access
- Keep devices and software up-to-date

7. Launch and maintain

- Share your website across social media and email
- Renew your domain name on time

8. Next steps (optional)

- Set up a professional email address with your .au domain name
- Add more content (FAQs, testimonials, new services)
- Set up analytics and business profiles
- Consider bookings, payments or eCommerce

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, spanning the width of the page.



About .auDA

.au Domain Administration Limited (auDA) is the trusted administrator of the .au domain name system (DNS), which is Australian critical infrastructure, supporting more than four million .au domain names.

auDA is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation, endorsed by the Australian Government to innovate and invest in the Australian internet ecosystem to improve the utility of the .au domain for all Australians.

Through its steady stewardship of the .au domain and support of internet governance through multi-stakeholder decision making, auDA strives to ensure the internet remains open, free, secure and interoperable.

Research figures quoted in this website guide are from the auDA market research conducted by Sagacity Research in February 2026.



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