

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · WEBSITES

IS YOUR WEBSITE SLOW? FIVE **QUICK** CHECKS

A slow website loses people before they've read a word. Google's Core Web Vitals, which measure loading, responsiveness and stability, are part of how it assesses page experience too. You don't need to be technical to find out whether yours has a problem: these five checks use free tools and take about 20 minutes.

By **Jack Easterbrook** 5 steps 8 min read Updated September 2026



BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ Your website address, plus two or three of your most important pages
- ☐ A phone, to try the site the way many customers will
- ☐ Optional: Search Console access (our GA4 & Search Console guide covers this)
- ☐ Optional: a login for your website or hosting, if you want to fix things yourself

Good to know: Test on mobile first. It's usually the harder test to pass, and PageSpeed Insights shows the mobile result by default.

THE STEPS TICK EACH ONE OFF AS YOU GO

1

Run PageSpeed Insights

Go to pagespeed.web.dev and test your home page and your most important service page. Look at the Core Web Vitals assessment at the top first: it's based on real visitors. The performance score underneath is a lab test: 90 or above is good, 50 to 89 needs improvement and under 50 is poor.



2

Check Core Web Vitals in Search Console

Open the Core Web Vitals report in Search Console. It groups your pages into Good, Need improvement and Poor for mobile and desktop, using real visitor data. The targets: LCP within 2.5 seconds, INP of 200 milliseconds or less, CLS of 0.1 or less. Smaller sites may not have enough visits to show data yet.



3

Look at your images

Oversized photos are one of the most common culprits. Make sure images are resized to the size they're shown at, compressed, and saved in a modern format like WebP or AVIF. Lazy-load images further down the page, but never the main image at the top. Our free [image optimiser](#) resizes and converts them in your browser.



4

Count your plugins, apps and scripts

Every plugin, Shopify app, chat widget, tracking pixel and embedded video adds weight. List what's installed, remove anything you don't use, and check whether PageSpeed Insights flags third-party code as slowing things down.



5

Check your hosting and caching

If pages are slow to start loading at all, the problem is often the server. Look for warnings about server response time in PageSpeed Insights. Budget hosting, no caching and no CDN are common causes. On WordPress, decent hosting and a good caching plugin make a big difference.



WHAT THE CORE WEB VITALS MEASURE

LCP (Largest Contentful Paint) is how long the biggest thing on screen takes to appear. INP (Interaction to Next Paint) is how quickly the page responds when someone taps or clicks. CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift) is how much things jump around while loading. Google measures them at the 75th percentile of real visits, so most of your visitors need a good experience, not just the lucky ones.

BEST-PRACTICE TIPS

A

Biggest win first

Don't chase a perfect 100. Fix whatever PageSpeed Insights says will save the most, then test again.

K

Real visitors beat lab scores

If your Core Web Vitals pass but the lab score is middling, you're in decent shape. Real-world data is what the Core Web Vitals report uses.

Q

Test after every change

New plugin, theme or tracking code? Run PageSpeed Insights again. Speed tends to creep down over time.

J

Embed video, don't upload it

Host videos on YouTube or Vimeo and embed them, rather than uploading big video files to your own site.

10

Fonts add up

Every extra font and weight is another file to download. Two font families is usually plenty.

9

Don't lazy-load the hero

Your main image at the top should load straight away. Lazy-loading it makes the page slower, not faster.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

What's a good PageSpeed score?

90 or above is good, 50 to 89 needs improvement and under 50 is poor. But pass the Core Web Vitals first: they're based on real visitors.

Why does my score change every time?

Lab tests vary with network conditions and server load. Run it a few times and look at the trend, not one number.

Search Console says there's not enough data

That's normal for smaller sites: the report needs enough real Chrome visits. Use PageSpeed Insights' lab results in the meantime.

Will a faster site rank higher?

Page experience is one of many things Google's systems look at, and great content still matters most. A faster site also means fewer people give up before it loads.



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Sources

- Web Vitals (web.dev): <https://web.dev/articles/vitals>
- Core Web Vitals report (Search Console Help): <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/9205520>
- About PageSpeed Insights (Google for Developers): <https://developers.google.com/speed/docs/insights/v5/about>
- Browser-level image lazy loading (web.dev): <https://web.dev/articles/browser-level-image-lazy-loading>

The online version of this guide, with any updates, is at jaedigital.co.uk/advice/website-speed-checks/.

got stuck? no shame in it

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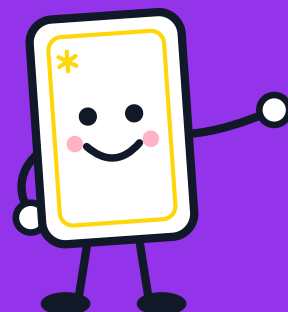
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