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Redesigning a website without losing your Google traffic

URLs, Redirects & Technical SEO

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Redesigning a website without losing your Google traffic

URLs, Redirects & Technical SEO Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



A new site on top of an old one loses visitors when **the pages Google knows disappear, change address without notice, or lose the text that made them show up**. The look matters least. The rule is simple: before changing, *know which pages bring visitors*; when changing, *keep their address and the substance of their content*, or point the old address at the new one. No method guarantees a position, but these steps remove the avoidable mistakes.

Before touching anything

1. **Take inventory.** List every address on the current site (the sitemap, or a crawl, will do) and add, for each, the visits it brings: the Search Console performance report has that per page (**Google Search Console, step by step**).

2. **Mark what brings visitors.** The few pages that give most of the visits are the ones to protect. The ones nobody ever sees can go.

3. **Keep a copy of the old site**, files and database (**your own backup**).

While building the new one

1. **Build it off-line**, at a test address (**a test site before touching what is live**), with the do-not-index option on so Google does not see the building work.

2. **Keep the addresses that bring visitors.** If a page was `/services/`, keep it so. See what a good address looks like in **what a good page URL looks like**.

3. **For the ones that change, draw a map** from old address to new, page by page, and prepare the 301 redirects (**301 redirects**).

4 **Carry over the text that worked.** If a page shows up for certain searches, do not cut it to two lines. Keep the title, the main text and the headings (**writing a page title and description that get clicked**).

5 **Carry over the images with their alt text, and the structured data,** if you had them.

On launch day

Check	Why
Switch off the "do not index" option.	The commonest mistake: the new site goes out with the building-phase block, and Google stops showing it.
The `robots.txt` blocks nothing that should be open.	See **robots.txt and sitemap.xml**.
The 301 redirects are live.	Test a dozen old addresses, including those that bring most visits.
There is a new sitemap, submitted in Search Console.	It gives Google the new list of addresses.
The titles and descriptions came across.	Pages without a title make them all look the same.
The canonical address and https are right.	See **the canonical tag**.

Over the following weeks, follow Search Console: crawl errors and pages that stopped showing reveal what was left behind (**crawl errors, one by one**). Expect some swings while Google visits everything again.

! **Do not point every old address at the home page.**
Someone looking for a specific page does not find it, and Google treats the old page as gone. Each old page points at its equivalent.

! **If you change domain too,**
there are extra steps (the change-of-address tool, keeping the old domain): **moving WordPress to a new domain**.

Pick a quiet hour to publish
and keep the old site for a week: if something goes wrong, you can go back.

NEED A HAND?

About to redo the site and want to review the address plan with us? Write to us.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- 301 redirects when you change a page or a domain
- Why your site does not show on Google: a checklist
- robots.txt and sitemap.xml: what they do and how to check them
- Crawl errors in Search Console: 404, soft 404 and server errors, one by one

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