



FIX 404 ERRORS & REDIRECTS CHECKLIST (Website Maintenance SEO)

If you'd like a simple, step-by-step way to apply everything in this guide, use this printable checklist as your roadmap. It walks you through the exact process to **find, prioritize, fix, and monitor 404 errors and redirects**, so you can protect your traffic and SEO without missing any critical steps.

1. PREP AND BACKUPS

- Backup your entire website (files and database).
- Backup your .htaccess file (if you use Apache).
- Backup any redirect/plugin configuration files.
- If possible, create or use a staging site to test changes first.

2. FIND ALL 404 ERRORS

TOOLS: Broken Links Finder, Google Search Console, crawler (e.g., Screaming Frog)

- Run [Broken Links Finder](#) on your site to detect:
 - Broken internal links (links to your own site that return 404).
 - Broken external links (links to other sites that return 404).
- Export the Broken Links Finder scan results.
- Copy or import the results into a spreadsheet.
- In [Google Search Console](#):
 - Open the Pages / Coverage report.
 - Filter for “Not found (404)” URLs.
 - Export the list of 404 URLs.
- (Optional) Crawl the site with a desktop crawler such as Screaming Frog.
- Consolidate all exported lists into one master 404 list in your spreadsheet.

3. PRIORITIZE WHAT TO FIX FIRST

In your spreadsheet, add columns for: Backlinks, Historic Traffic, Priority, and Fix Type.

- Mark as HIGH PRIORITY:
 - 404 URLs that have external backlinks.
 - 404 URLs that previously received significant organic traffic.
 - 404 URLs linked from navigation menus or key conversion funnels.

- Mark as MEDIUM PRIORITY:
 - 404 URLs coming from internal links on important content pages.

- Mark as LOW PRIORITY:
 - Old URLs with no backlinks and no meaningful traffic.

- Decide the appropriate fix type for each 404 URL:
 - 301 redirect to a relevant live page.
 - Recreate or restore the missing content.
 - Leave as a genuine 404 if the page is obsolete and has no value.

4. PLAN REDIRECT TARGETS

For every HIGH or MEDIUM priority 404 URL:

- Choose the most relevant replacement page on your site.
- Avoid redirecting everything to the homepage.
- For multiple similar old pages, plan to consolidate them into one updated page.
- Record the final target URL for each 404 URL in your spreadsheet (old URL → new URL).

5. CREATE 301 REDIRECTS

TOOLS: Htaccess Redirect Generator, platform redirect tools, WordPress plugins

IF YOU USE APACHE / .HTACCESS:

- Open [Htaccess Redirect Generator](#).
- For each old URL and new URL pair:
- Select 301 redirect type.
- Generate the redirect rule.

- Copy all generated rules into a text file for review.

- Connect to your server (FTP or file manager).
- Open the .htaccess file in the site's root directory.
- Paste the new 301 redirect rules in the appropriate place.
- Save the file.

IF YOU USE WORDPRESS REDIRECT PLUGINS:

- Install or confirm a redirect plugin (e.g., Redirection, Yoast, Rank Math).
- Add 301 redirects for each old → new URL mapping using the plugin interface.
- Check for and remove any duplicate or conflicting redirect rules.

IF YOU USE SHOPIFY, WIX, SQUARESPACE OR SIMILAR:

- Open your platform's URL redirect settings.
- Create 301 redirects for each old URL pointing to the chosen new URL.

6. TEST YOUR REDIRECTS

- Manually type a sample of old URLs into your browser.
- Confirm they land on the correct relevant page.
- Use a redirect checker tool to verify:
- The redirect status code is 301 (Moved Permanently).
- There are no redirect loops (URL A → URL B → URL A).
- There are no long redirect chains (URL A → B → C → D).

7. VERIFY INDEXING OF DESTINATION PAGES

TOOLS: [Google Index Checker](#), [Google Search Console](#)

- Open [Google Index Checker](#).
- Enter the main destination (new) URLs that you redirected to.
- Check which URLs are currently indexed by Google.

FOR IMPORTANT PAGES THAT ARE NOT INDEXED:

- Inspect the URL in Google Search Console.
- Confirm the URL:
 - Returns a 200 OK status.
 - Is not blocked by robots.txt.
 - Does not have a noindex tag.
 - Is included in your XML sitemap (if appropriate).
- Use “Request indexing” in Google Search Console for high-value URLs.

8. CLEAN UP BROKEN EXTERNAL LINKS

From your Broken Links Finder report:

- Filter to show only broken external links.

For each broken external link:

- Try to find a new, valid URL from the same site (updated article or resource).
- If a good replacement exists, update the link to the new URL.
- If not, remove the broken link or replace it with a different high-quality source.

9. IMPROVE YOUR 404 PAGE

- Ensure missing pages return a real 404 HTTP status code (not 200).

Your custom 404 page should:

- Clearly explain that the page cannot be found.
- Provide a search box to help users find what they need.
- Include links to key sections (Home, Blog, Services, Contact).
- Highlight a few popular or recommended articles/pages.
- Match your site's design so users know they're still on your website.

10. SET UP ONGOING MAINTENANCE

MONTHLY TASKS:

- Run [Broken Links Finder](#) to detect new broken links.
- Check [Google Search Console](#) Pages / Coverage report for new "Not found (404)" URLs.

WHENEVER YOU PLAN MAJOR CHANGES (REDESIGN, MIGRATION, PRUNING):

- Export a list of current URLs.
- Decide which URLs will be deleted, merged, or moved.
- Prepare an old URL → new URL mapping file in advance.
- Implement 301 redirects before or at launch.
- Test redirects and key user journeys after the changes go live.

NOTES AND REMINDERS

- Always back up your site and configuration files before editing .htaccess or redirects.
- Where possible, test new redirects on a staging or development site first.
- Fixing 404 errors and maintaining redirects is an ongoing process, not a one-time task.