

Keep your website running yourself

A plain-English, step-by-step guide for small-business owners who want to look after their own site: renewing the domain, changing text and photos, and keeping it online. It is written for the most common setup, a simple (“static”) website on a host such as Cloudflare Pages, with a domain from a registrar such as Cloudflare, Namecheap or GoDaddy.

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Before you start: menus and button names change from time to time. If a step below doesn't match what you see, search your provider's help pages for the words in *italics*.

1 The three pieces of a website

- **The domain** (for example `yourbusiness.com`) is your address. You rent it from a *registrar* (Cloudflare, Namecheap, GoDaddy and others), usually by the year.
- **The hosting** is where the site's files live and are served from, for example Cloudflare Pages, Netlify or GitHub Pages.
- **DNS** is the address book that points your domain at your hosting. It is managed wherever your domain's *nameservers* point, often the registrar or Cloudflare.

Write down where each piece lives and keep the logins somewhere safe, such as a password manager. If someone else set the site up for you, ask them for: the registrar login, the hosting login, and a copy of the site files.

2 Renew your domain (and turn on auto-renew)

If a domain expires, the website and any email on that domain stop working. Many domains have a short grace period after expiry, but getting one back later can cost extra, and once it is released anyone can register it.

- 1 Sign in to your registrar and open your domain list.
- 2 Check the **expiration date** for your domain.
- 3 Turn on *auto-renew* for the domain.
- 4 Make sure the **payment card** on the account is current. Auto-renew fails quietly if the card has expired.
- 5 Make sure the account **email address** is one you read. Renewal reminders and important notices go there.
- 6 Turn on **two-factor authentication** for the account, and leave the domain's *transfer lock* (registrar lock) on.

Cloudflare Registrar

In the Cloudflare dashboard, open *Domain Registration* → *Manage Domains*, choose your domain and check its *auto-renew* setting and expiration date. Payment details are under the account's *Billing* section.

Namecheap

Open *Domain List* in your dashboard. Each domain has an *Auto-Renew* switch and shows its expiration date. Use *Manage* to see more settings.

GoDaddy

Open your *Domain Portfolio* (under *My Products / Domains*), select the domain and check the *auto-renew* setting and the expiration date.

Tip: if your registrar offers it, renewing for several years at once means fewer chances of a missed payment.

3 DNS basics

You usually only touch DNS when you first connect a domain or move hosts. The common record types:

RECORD	WHAT IT DOES
A / AAAA	Points a name at a server's IP address (IPv4 / IPv6).
CNAME	Points one name at another name, for example <code>www</code> → <code>yourproject.pages.dev</code> .
MX	Tells the world where your email is delivered. Don't delete these unless you are moving email.
TXT	Text used for verification and email security (such as SPF and DKIM). Leave existing ones alone unless you know what they are for.
NS	<i>Nameservers</i> : which company answers DNS for your domain. Your records must be edited there.

- **Before changing anything**, take a screenshot of your current DNS records so you can put them back.
- Changes often show up within minutes, but can take up to 24–48 hours to reach everyone, depending on the record's *TTL* and on caches.
- **Cloudflare Pages**: add your domain in the Pages project under *Custom domains*. If the domain's DNS is already on Cloudflare, the record is created for you. A subdomain such as `www` can also be pointed from another DNS provider with a `CNAME` to your `*.pages.dev` address. A root ("apex") domain like `yourbusiness.com` generally needs its DNS on Cloudflare.

4 Keep the site online

A static website is just files, with no server or plugins to update, so it needs very little looking after. Most of the work is keeping the accounts healthy.

- 1 **Keep the hosting account active.** Don't delete the project, and keep its login and two-factor authentication working.
- 2 **HTTPS (the padlock)** is issued and renewed automatically by hosts such as Cloudflare Pages, Netlify and GitHub Pages once the domain is connected correctly. If the padlock disappears, check the custom-domain status in your host's dashboard.
- 3 **Know your plan.** Free plans are generous for small sites, but limits and terms change. Glance at your host's plan page once a year.
- 4 **Get told if it goes down.** A free uptime monitor (for example UptimeRobot) can email you if the site stops responding.
- 5 **Keep a backup** of the site files on your computer or cloud storage, especially before making changes.

5 Change text, hours and prices

On a simple site, the words live in `.html` files (the home page is usually `index.html`).

- 1 Make a **copy** of the site folder first.
- 2 Open the file in a plain-text editor such as Visual Studio Code (free), Notepad on Windows, or TextEdit on a Mac set to *plain text*. Don't use a word processor like Word.
- 3 Use *Find* (Ctrl+F / ⌘F) to locate the text you want to change, for example your old opening hours.
- 4 Change only the words **between** the tags. In `<p>Open 8am–5pm</p>` , edit `Open 8am–5pm` and leave `<p>` and `</p>` alone.
- 5 Save, then open the file in your web browser to check it before publishing.

Tip: a phone number often appears twice, once as text and once in a link like `href="tel:+15555550123"` . Change both. Also update the same details on your Google Business Profile so they match.

6 Change photos

- 1 **Resize first.** About 1600 pixels wide is plenty for a full-width photo. Compress it with a free tool such as Squoosh. Aim for a few hundred KB or less.
- 2 **Easiest swap:** give the new photo the **exact same file name** (and type, such as `.jpg`) as the old one and replace it in the images folder. Nothing else needs to change.
- 3 **Or** add the new file and update the `src="..."` in the matching `<img>` tag to its name.
- 4 Update the `alt="..."` text to describe the new photo. It helps people using screen readers and search engines.
- 5 If your browser still shows the old photo, do a hard refresh (Ctrl+Shift+R / ⌘ ⌥ R).

7 Publish your changes

How you publish depends on how the site was set up. On Cloudflare Pages there are two common ways:

- **Connected to Git (GitHub or GitLab):** commit and push your changes, and Pages builds and publishes them automatically.
- **Direct upload:** in the Cloudflare dashboard, open your Pages project and create a new deployment by uploading the updated site folder. People comfortable with a command line can use Cloudflare's `wrangler pages deploy` command instead.

Made a mistake? Cloudflare Pages keeps earlier deployments, so you can roll back to a previous one from the project's deployments list. Other static hosts offer similar options.

8 Checklists

Every month (5 minutes)

- ☐ Open the site on your phone. Do the hours, prices and phone number look right?
- ☐ Tap the phone number and contact links to check they work.
- ☐ Make sure the padlock (HTTPS) shows in the address bar.

Every year

- ☐ Check the domain's expiration date and that auto-renew is on.
- ☐ Check that the payment card on the registrar account is current.
- ☐ Check that you can still sign in to the registrar and the host.
- ☐ Refresh old photos and save a fresh backup of the files.

Rather not do it yourself?

That's fine too. Corvionix offers pay-as-you-go updates, a done-for-you handoff (\$40, including the first year of a standard .com domain registered in your name), and monthly or yearly care. **See the after-launch options.**

This guide is general information for common setups. Providers change their menus, prices and terms, so always follow your provider's current instructions.