

A VIBE CODER'S CHECKLIST

# The Ten-Minute Design Audit

*A Vibe Coder's Checklist*

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Twenty-three binary checks that take a generated-looking page to an authored one. Free edition - run it against your site today.

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# 1. How to Use This Audit

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Open your site in one window and this checklist in another. Work top to bottom - the items are ordered by impact, so if you only fix the first five, you capture most of the value. Every item is binary: it is either true of your page or it is not. Where an item fails, the line under it names the exact fix. Most first audits surface eight to ten failures; do not be discouraged, each fix takes minutes, and the audit gets faster every time you run it. After two or three sites, you will stop needing the list.

*The bar did not get higher. The floor did. Step over it.*

## 2. Part One: Typography (Minutes 0-3)

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1. Identity font check: is your heading font Inter, Roboto, Arial, or system-ui? Fix: replace with a face that has character - Fontshare's Clash Display, Gambetta, or Cabinet Grotesk, or Google's Fraunces, Instrument Serif, or Bricolage Grotesque.
2. Pairing check: do headings and body use the same family? Fix: pair one expressive display face with one quiet text face. Three families maximum including any mono.
3. Spacing check: does display type have letter-spacing between -0.02em and -0.04em and line-height 1.05-1.15? Fix: tighten headings; body stays 1.5-1.65.
4. Measure check: does body text run past 80 characters per line? Fix: cap paragraphs at 60-75ch with a max-width.
5. Contrast check: is your hero headline less than 3x the body size? Fix: push it to 48-96px. Size contrast is free drama.

**6. Numbers check:** do prices and stats use tabular figures? Fix: font-variant-numeric: tabular-nums.

The single highest-value minute in this audit is item one. Changing the identity font from a default to a character face alters the perceived authorship of the entire page - visitors cannot name what changed, but they register that a person chose this. That registration is the entire game this audit plays.

## CHAPTER 03

# 3. Part Two: Color (Minutes 3-5)

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- 1. Gradient check:** any blue-to-violet or purple gradient anywhere? Fix: remove entirely. This is the loudest generated-site tell in existence.
- 2. Accent-count check:** more than one accent color? Fix: keep one; everything else becomes neutral ramp steps.
- 3. Ramp check:** fewer than 6 grays between white and black? Fix: build a 9-10 step ramp with one consistent warm or cool cast.
- 4. Dark-mode check (if applicable):** did dark mode just invert? Fix: drop accent saturation ~20%, layer 2-3 background steps, never pure white on pure black.
- 5. Selection check:** is ::selection still browser-default blue? Fix: set it to your accent, white text. A ten-second fix that reads as craft.

## CHAPTER 04

# 4. Part Three: Layout (Minutes 5-8)

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- 1. Centered-column check:** is the whole page one centered stack of equal-width sections? Fix: split at least one section 5/7 or 4/8 on a 12-col grid.
- 2. Card-equality check:** three identical feature cards in a row? Fix: vary the pattern - one wide + two narrow, or a list with hairline dividers instead of cards.

3. Whitespace check: section padding under 80px on desktop? Fix: 96-160px. Group tightly within, separate generously between.
4. Radius check: more than two distinct border radii on the page? Fix: pick two (e.g. 8px and pill), apply everywhere.
5. Shadow check: heavy diffuse drop shadows? Fix: 1px borders in a low-contrast ramp step plus subtle background shifts.
6. Focal check: does each viewport have one clear focal point? Fix: if two elements compete, demote one.

## CHAPTER 05

# 5. Part Four: Motion and Polish (Minutes 8-10)

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1. Hover check: do all links and buttons respond within 150-250ms? Fix: add CSS transitions - color, border, tiny translate. Nothing fancy.
2. Focus check: is keyboard focus visible? Fix: style :focus-visible with the accent ring; never remove outlines.
3. Reveal check: do elements fly in from random directions on scroll? Fix: one pattern only - 8-16px translate + fade, once, with prefers-reduced-motion honored.
4. Personality check: more than one flourish on the page? Fix: keep the single best one. One signature beats three stunts.
5. Favicon and OG check: do favicon, OG image, and 404 page exist and match? Fix: 20 minutes, once, pays on every share.
6. Meta check: do title and description read like a human wrote them? Fix: rewrite with specifics and one concrete number.

## 6. Scoring and Next Steps

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Count your passes. Fourteen or more: your site clears the floor - the remaining gains are polish, and the full method lives in *The Human Touch: Design for Vibe Coders*, which expands every item here into a chapter with pairings, palettes, and the complete verified library. Eight to thirteen: fix typography and color first; those two sections move perception more than everything else combined. Under eight: you are shipping the default web, and the good news is that the fixes are the cheapest wins in this entire field - one focused afternoon, applied item by item.

Run the audit again after fixing, on a real screen, at real distance - arm's length, squinting. The squint test never lies: if the page holds structure and hierarchy when blurred, the bones are right. Ship when it does.