SEO domain migration checklist

1. Pre-migration planning (before changing the domain)

☐ **Audit your existing website**
- Identify high-ranking pages, backlinks, and traffic sources.
- Use tools like Google Search Console, Ahrefs, or SEMrush.

☐ **Choose a clean new domain**
- Ensure the new domain isn't penalised or has a bad history (Check with Wayback Machine & Google Search Console).
- If rebranding, keep the new domain relevant to your industry.

☐ **Back up everything**
- Download website files, databases, and old domain's sitemap.

☐ **Create a URL mapping plan**
- Maintain the same URL structure whenever possible.
- If changes are needed, map old URLs to new ones.

☐ **Inform stakeholders**
- Notify your team, partners, and important backlinks sources.

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2. Migration execution
(implement the domain change)

☐ **Set up the new domain**
- Install SSL (HTTPS) on the new domain.
- Ensure hosting and CMS configurations match the old site.

☐ **Implement 301 redirects**
- Use 301 (Permanent) Redirects from old domain URLs to new ones.
- Avoid redirecting everything to the homepage (preserve page-to-page mapping).

☐ **Update internal links**
- Update links within your content to point to the new domain.
- Update canonical tags to reflect the new domain.

☐ **Update XML sitemap, robots.txt and schema data.**
- Generate a new XML sitemap and submit it to Google Search Console.
- Ensure robots.txt allows crawling of the new domain.
- Review and update your structured data (schema data.)

☐ **Notify Google of the change**
- Use Google Search Console's Change of Address Tool.
- Submit both old and new sitemaps.

☐ **Update Google Analytics & other tools**
- Update property settings in Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager.
- Update tracking codes and scripts on the new site.

☐ **Monitor 404 errors & fix them**
- Use tools like Google Search Console and Screaming Frog to find broken links.

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3. Post-migration monitoring
(after the domain change)

☐ **Check Google indexing**
- Perform site:newdomain.com in Google to check indexing.
- Ensure key pages appear in search results.

☐ **Track rankings & traffic**
- Expect a slight dip for 1-2 weeks, then monitor recovery.
- Compare rankings using Google Search Console, Ahrefs, or SEMrush.

☐ **Update backlinks**
- Identify high-value backlinks to your old domain.
- Reach out to webmasters and request they update to your new domain.

☐ **Update social media & business listings**
- Update the domain on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and other profiles.
- Modify citations in directories like Google My Business, Bing etc..

☐ **Rebuild authority**
- Publish new content to boost the new domain's visibility.
- Share the new domain across networks, forums, and PR channels.