The Complete DNS Cutover Checklist

A print-friendly worksheet for switching DNS safely and verifying the cutover worked

Use phases 1 and 4 for every cutover. Use phase 2 if you are changing nameservers. Use phase 3 if you are updating A records only. Record values as you go so you have a reference for verification and a clean rollback path if needed.

Domain	_____	**Current DNS provider**	_____
New host/IP or target	_____	**Cutover method**	_____
Scheduled cutover date	_____	**Cutover time**	_____
Prepared by	_____	**Rollback owner**	_____

Cutover snapshot

Primary method: ☐ Nameserver change ☐ A record update only	**Critical services:** ☐ Website ☐ Email ☐ Forms ☐ Checkout ☐ CDN/proxy
DNSSEC enabled: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure	**Rollback plan ready:** ☐ Yes ☐ No

Phase 1: Preparation (Before Cutover)

☐ DNS cutover method confirmed: nameserver change OR A record update only

☐ Access to required control panels confirmed: registrar dashboard (for nameserver changes) and/or DNS provider dashboard (for record updates)

☐ Domain status confirmed: domain is active, not expired or suspended and registrar account access is working

☐ Current TTL values noted for A records, MX records and nameserver records

☐ Record TTLs reduced on records you control (A, AAAA, CNAME, MX, TXT) to 300 seconds or the lowest value your DNS provider allows; wait a full cycle of the original TTL duration after reducing before changing the IP address, so all long-term caches have expired (example: if original TTL was 86,400 seconds, reduce TTL and allow 24 hours before cutover; if TTL was already 3,600 seconds, a few hours is sufficient)

☐ If changing nameservers: plan for additional propagation buffer; nameserver delegation caching is managed at the registry level, is less predictable than record TTL and is not fully controllable through your zone settings

☐ If changing nameservers: confirmed that only new nameserver values will be entered at the registrar; do not mix old and new nameservers during the transition

☐ DNSSEC status checked: if DNSSEC is enabled and nameservers are changing, follow the correct sequence: remove DS records at the registrar first, wait for the DS record TTL to expire, then change nameservers, then add new DS records at the registrar if the new provider supports DNSSEC; changing nameservers while old DS records are active will cause DNSSEC validation failures globally

- ☐ Full DNS zone exported and saved: all record types documented (A, AAAA, CNAME, MX, TXT including SPF, DKIM, DMARC and verification tokens, SRV, CAA and any provider-specific records)
- ☐ Email records documented separately: MX hostname and priority value; SPF TXT record full value; DKIM selector name and TXT value; DMARC policy TXT value
- ☐ Third-party verification TXT records documented: site ownership tokens, email service verification records and app platform verification records noted
- ☐ New hosting server IP address or CNAME target confirmed from hosting dashboard (not from memory or old notes)
- ☐ SSL certificate: ideally installed and active on new host before DNS change; many hosting panels handle HTTP-01 validation automatically as part of setup; where not automated, DNS-01 validation can be completed before cutover; if HTTP-01 is required and not automated, have the issuance process ready to run immediately after propagation begins
- ☐ New site tested via hosts file override or preview URL: homepage, key pages, forms, checkout, SSL and no PHP errors confirmed
- ☐ robots.txt on new host confirmed: no disallow rules blocking crawlers
- ☐ No unrelated changes scheduled during the cutover window: plugin updates, theme changes, email provider changes, CDN changes and permalink changes should be deferred
- ☐ Rollback plan documented: which record to revert, what value to restore, who has access and how quickly the rollback will propagate given current TTL
- ☐ Low-traffic window confirmed for execution: cutover time scheduled

Notes for this phase

Phase 2: Nameserver Cutover (if changing nameservers)

- ☐ New DNS zone created at new DNS provider
- ☐ All records recreated in new zone from exported DNS zone: A, AAAA, CNAME, MX, all TXT records (SPF, DKIM, DMARC, verification tokens), SRV, CAA
- ☐ TXT records verified after recreation: final published values confirmed via DNS lookup to match originals (watch for provider-specific formatting differences in quotes, hostnames and split strings)
- ☐ MX records confirmed present and correct in new zone before nameservers are changed
- ☐ SPF, DKIM and DMARC records confirmed present and correct in new zone before nameservers are changed
- ☐ All third-party verification TXT records confirmed present in new zone before nameservers are changed
- ☐ CAA records recreated if present in original zone
- ☐ All subdomains confirmed present in new zone
- ☐ DNSSEC: if enabled, DS records removed at registrar and DS TTL confirmed expired before proceeding with nameserver change

- ☐ Registrar-side settings confirmed: nameservers ready to update, domain not locked against changes
- ☐ New nameserver values obtained from new DNS provider
- ☐ Nameservers updated at domain registrar to new values only: no old nameserver values left alongside new ones
- ☐ Date and exact time of nameserver change recorded
- ☐ Old DNS zone left intact at previous provider: do not delete until web traffic and email are both confirmed stable on new environment

Notes for this phase

Phase 3: A Record Cutover (if updating records only)

- ☐ TTL confirmed at 300 seconds (or lowest available) before making any record change
- ☐ Root domain A record (@) updated to new hosting server IP address; if host provides a hostname instead of IP, ALIAS, ANAME or CNAME flattening used per DNS provider's supported record type
- ☐ www A record or CNAME updated to new hosting server IP or canonical hostname
- ☐ AAAA records checked: if the new host does not provide a matching IPv6 address, old AAAA records must be deleted; leaving them intact causes intermittent failures for dual-stack (IPv4/IPv6) users who attempt to connect via the old IPv6 address
- ☐ MX records confirmed unchanged and still pointing to existing mail server
- ☐ SPF, DKIM and DMARC records confirmed present and unchanged
- ☐ Any subdomains that should point to new host updated; all others confirmed unchanged
- ☐ Date and exact time of A record change recorded
- ☐ No other DNS changes made simultaneously

Notes for this phase

Phase 4: Post-Cutover Verification and Cleanup

- ☐ DNS propagation checked from multiple geographic locations using DNSChecker.org or equivalent
- ☐ Authoritative answer verified: new A record queried directly against the new nameservers to confirm correct at source; if public recursive resolvers still show the old IP, query authoritative nameservers first before assuming a configuration error, as upstream ISPs may enforce their own minimum cache times regardless of your TTL setting
- ☐ Recursive resolution verified: A record confirmed from Google public DNS (8.8.8.8) and Cloudflare DNS (1.1.1.1) to confirm real-world resolution behavior

- ☐ Site loading correctly on new host confirmed from multiple devices
- ☐ Site tested from a network separate from pre-cutover testing (mobile cellular data recommended as it often uses a different resolver path)
- ☐ HTTPS active: padlock visible, no certificate warnings, no mixed content in browser console
- ☐ Test email sent from domain address to external inbox and received successfully
- ☐ Test reply sent back to domain address and received successfully
- ☐ Inbound mail server logs monitored on both old and new environments for the first 24 hours: external mail servers cache MX records aggressively and some will continue routing to the old server for hours after the cutover; confirm no messages are left stranded on the old mail server
- ☐ Contact form submitted and submission confirmed received
- ☐ Checkout or payment flow tested if applicable
- ☐ Old hosting environment confirmed still active during propagation window
- ☐ DNS propagation confirmed complete: old server receiving no meaningful traffic confirmed by checking server-level logs and analytics from both environments; CDN or proxy layers may obscure origin traffic and both sources should be checked
- ☐ TTL raised back to normal steady-state value (3,600 seconds is a common choice; use your normal baseline)
- ☐ Full DNS health check run to confirm all record types are correctly configured at new provider
- ☐ DNS zone backup saved from new provider
- ☐ Old hosting cancelled only after traffic has fully shifted and rollback is no longer needed
- ☐ Old DNS provider account reviewed separately before cancellation: confirm no other domains, zones or services depend on it
- ☐ Cutover documented: method used, records changed, date completed, any issues encountered and resolved

Notes for this phase

Disclaimer

This checklist is for general informational and organizational purposes only. It is not technical, legal, financial, or professional advice. It should not replace a personalized plan, licensed professional guidance or provider-specific instructions, and it must be adapted to your situation.

DNS cutover steps, control panel layouts, record management tools, propagation timing, SSL issuance methods, DNSSEC requirements and hosting procedures vary by registrar, DNS provider and hosting provider, and may change over time. Always verify current record values and configuration requirements directly with your DNS provider, domain registrar and hosting provider before making changes.

Keep your existing DNS zone, old hosting environment and rollback option active until the cutover is confirmed complete. For business-critical websites, email-dependent businesses, ecommerce stores or regulated environments, have a qualified hosting or DNS professional review the cutover plan before execution.

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