



A MARBL CODES GUIDE

What is a good website, **really**?

And what to look out for when you are choosing someone to build it.

INSIDE

Five things a good site does

THEN

Eight questions to ask

AND

Eight red flags



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Five things a good website **does**

Good is not about how it looks on the day it launches. It is about what the site does for your business every day after. Each of these comes with a check you can do yourself in a few minutes.

01 Fast

It loads quickly on a phone with a weak signal, not only on the office broadband it was designed on. Slow pages lose visitors before they have read a word.

Check it: Put your homepage into Google PageSpeed Insights and read the mobile result, not the desktop one.

02 Found

People can find it on Google, on the map and in the answers AI assistants give. A beautiful site nobody reaches is a brochure in a drawer.

Check it: Search your main service and your town. Then ask ChatGPT or Google who does it near you.

03 Clear

A visitor knows within a few seconds what you do, where you do it and how to get in touch. Clever wording that makes people guess costs you enquiries.

Check it: Show the homepage to a friend for five seconds, take it away, and ask them what you do.

04 Usable by everyone

It works with a keyboard, a screen reader, zoomed text and colour blindness. It is the right thing to do, and shutting out disabled customers can fall foul of the Equality Act 2010.

Check it: Try to use the site with only the Tab and Enter keys. Can you reach the contact form?

05 Yours, and looked after

You own the domain, the content and the logins. Someone updates it, backs it up and keeps an eye on it every month, so it is as good in three years as it was on launch day.

Check it: Ask for a list of every account your site depends on, and whose name each one is in.

Eight questions to ask **any** agency

Ask them of us, too. A good agency answers every one of these plainly and in writing. If an answer is vague, that is an answer.

Who owns the domain, the website and the content when we are done?

The answer should be you. Registered in your name, with the agency given access rather than the other way round.

Will I have my own logins?

To the domain, the hosting, the website and the analytics. Not only a password the agency can change.

Is it designed for us, or built on a ready-made theme?

Both can be fine. You should know which one you are buying, and the price should match it.

What will it cost every year after launch?

Hosting, domain, licences, updates and support, written down before you sign, not discovered afterwards.

What happens after launch?

Who makes changes, how quickly they reply, and what that costs. A website is never finished on the day it goes live.

Who will I actually talk to?

The person doing the work, or someone who passes messages on? Ask for a name.

Can I see sites you built a few years ago?

Not only the newest. A site that is still running and still fast three years on tells you more than a showreel.

If we part ways, can I take the site with me?

You should be able to leave with your files, your content and your domain, and without a fee for the privilege.

What to look out for

None of these on its own means walk away. Two or three together usually does.

■ Guaranteed rankings

"Number one on Google in 30 days." Nobody controls Google, so nobody can promise a position.

■ Hosting you cannot leave

A site that only runs on their platform, and cannot be exported, is a site you are renting.

■ Nobody with a name

An account manager between you and the people doing the work, and a new one every few months.

■ A rebuild before anyone looks

Being told you need a new site, an app or AI before anyone has looked at what you already have.

■ The domain in their name

If the agency owns your domain, they own your address. Check before anything else.

■ A low price with the rest hidden

A cheap build that becomes expensive in monthly fees once you are committed.

■ Reports without enquiries

Pages of impressions and reach, and not one line about calls, forms or sales.

■ A portfolio of ghosts

Case studies of sites that no longer exist, or no longer look like the pictures.

AND OUR ARCH-NEMESIS

THE \$69 THEME

There is a kind of "web designer" who cannot design or build a website. They buy a ready-made theme for the price of a takeaway, change the logo, and sell it to you as bespoke. Ten thousand other sites are running the same one, and the person who sold it cannot change it, because they did not build it.

The bloat

Forty plugins bundled with the theme doing the job of four, and a home page that takes seconds to arrive.

The adverts

"Powered by" in the footer. Someone else's marketing on your site, paid for by you.

The silence

Six months on, an update breaks the checkout and the number on the invoice no longer answers.

Three small steps

1 Check the site you have

Run the free website check at marbl.codes: speed, accessibility, and how ready your site is to be found in search and cited by AI assistants. Results on screen, straight away.

2 Ask the questions

Take page three to your current agency, or to anyone you are thinking of hiring. Including us.

3 Talk it through

If you would like a second opinion, tell us what you are trying to do. A person reads every message and replies the same working day. No obligation, no jargon and no sales sequence afterwards.

The one to check today: find out whose name your domain is registered in. If it is not yours, or your business's, ask for it to be moved. It is usually a five-minute job, and it is the difference between owning your address and renting it.

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