

# AI Ready Websites Playbook

## Comprehensive Checklists

Author: Danut Istrate – Business Analyst & SEO/AI Consultant

This document is the detailed companion to the public article "Building an AI-Ready Website".

Use it to audit, plan, and sequence work. Includes frameworks, checklists, and a 6 week roadmap.

### **Table of Contents**

1. Foundations Principles & Outcomes
2. Structural Semantics (Headings, Landmarks, Navigation)
3. Performance & Crawlability (Core Web Vitals & Rendering)
4. Media Accessibility & Rich Content (Images, Charts, Video)
5. Metadata & Structured Data (Schema, Canonicals, Hreflang)
6. Sitemaps & Index Management (Automation & Monitoring)
7. AI Summaries & Content Ops (HITL governance)
8. Governance & Compliance (CI Gates, Dashboards)
9. Six Week Roadmap (Action Plan)
10. Worksheets & Scorecards

## 1) Foundations Principles & Outcomes

Outcome-driven: improve LLM inclusion, accurate attribution, and trustworthy snippets.

Accessibility-first: what helps assistive tech also helps indexers and LLMs.

Measurable: treat performance and semantics as KPIs with owners and review cadences.

Sustainable: encode rules in components, CMS validations, and CI checks.

## 2) Structural Semantics

### Checklist

One `<h1>` per page (page title); consistent H2/H3/H4 nesting; no skipped levels.

Navigation rendered server-side in `<nav>` with `<ul>/<li>/<a>` and ARIA where appropriate.

Landmarks used: `<main>`, `<header>`, `<footer>`, `<aside>`, `<section>`, `<article>`.

No headings used purely for styling; typography via classes/tokens.

Cards/lists: parent section uses H2; item titles are H3; item sub-parts are H4.

### Validation

CI linter: fail on multiple H1s, level skipping, empty headings, or headings as links.

Authoring controls: authors pick semantic category (Primary/Secondary/Tertiary) not raw H-level.

### 3) Performance & Crawlability

#### Checklist

- Defer/async for non-critical JS; code-split and tree-shake.
- Inline critical CSS; load the rest non-blocking; preconnect third-party origins.
- Image/iframe dimensions set; placeholders to prevent CLS.
- CDN with cache-busting; long-lived static caching; HTML compressed.
- Lighthouse/PageSpeed CI thresholds: LCP<2.5s, CLS<0.1, INP<200ms.

#### Practices

Prefer SSR/SSG for core content; hydrate interactivity afterward.

Track and remediate render-blocking resources each sprint.

## 4) Media Accessibility & Rich Content

### Checklist—Images

- Alt text present and contextual; decorative images use alt="".
- Charts as SVG wrapped in <figure> with <figcaption> summarizing the takeaway.

### Checklist—Video

- Lazy-loaded player with accessible play control (keyboard/ARIA).
- Reserved player dimensions to avoid CLS; analytics re-bound after load.

### Transcripts

- Provide captions/transcripts for audio/video; publish in HTML for crawlability.

## 5) Metadata & Structured Data

### Checklist

- [ ] Correct Schema.org type per template with required fields (author, dates, about).
- [ ] Canonical tag normalized; no /index duplication; avoid parameterized canonicals.
- [ ] Hreflang complete and reciprocal; x-default set appropriately.
- [ ] Store a 50–100 word abstract per long page (visible + in metadata).
- [ ] JSON-LD validated in CI with human-readable error messaging.

### Notes

Keep datePublished/dateModified honest; display last substantive update in DOM.

Centralize metadata in a service to avoid drift across templates.

## 6) Sitemaps & Index Management

### Checklist

- [ ] Sitemap index + child sitemaps per type/locale/month; auto-generated.
- [ ] Accurate <lastmod> from substantive content changes (not just styling).
- [ ] Auto-submit to search engines via APIs; verify ingestion and errors.
- [ ] Dashboard: URL counts, freshness histogram, 4xx/5xx rates, orphaned vs indexed.

### Runbook

On release: regenerate affected child sitemaps; invalidate CDN for index only.

Alerts: submission failures, rising error rates, stale lastmod share >5%.

## 7) AI Summaries & Content Ops

### Checklist

- [ ] “Generate Summary” action in CMS; 50–100 word neutral, source-faithful abstract.
- [ ] Human-in-the-loop approval for regulated content; store version history.
- [ ] AI-assisted alt text drafting with editor override; store in image metadata.
- [ ] Prohibit publish if alt text/caption/summary missing for required templates.

### Governance

Confidence/scoring thresholds; auto-flag low confidence or policy risks.

Monthly evaluation set: measure quality and drift.

## 8) Governance & Compliance

### Checklist

[ ] CI gates: Accessibility (axe/Lighthouse), Performance (Web Vitals), Schema validation.

[ ] CMS validations: semantic category for headings, required fields enforced.

[ ] Dashboards: Web Vitals, structured data errors, sitemap health, 404/5xx.

[ ] Audit logs for metadata/summaries; who changed what and when.

### Policy

AI metadata can draft; human approves. Document exceptions and ownership.

## 9) Six-Week Roadmap

Week 1 — Audit: headings, navigation, performance, schema, sitemaps.

Week 2 — Structure: fix heading rules; SSR navigation; authoring categories.

Week 3 — Performance: JS deferral, critical CSS, CLS fixes; CI thresholds.

Week 4 — Media: enforce alt/figcaption; SVG charts; accessible lazy video.

Week 5 — Metadata: schema templates; summary fields; sitemap worker.

Week 6 — Governance: CMS checks; dashboards; training & runbooks.

## 10) Worksheets & Scorecards

### A) Page Outline Scorecard (per URL)

- H1 present (Y/N) ... H2/H3 nesting valid (Y/N) ... Headings unique (Y/N)
- Navigation SSR (Y/N) ... Landmarks present (Y/N) ...

### B) Performance KPIs (mobile)

- LCP: \_\_\_\_s CLS: \_\_\_\_ INP: \_\_\_\_ms TTFB: \_\_\_\_ms Pass/Fail: \_\_\_\_

### C) Media Semantics

- Image alt text present (%) ... Charts with figcaption (%) ... Video lazy-loaded (Y/N)

### D) Metadata/Schema

- JSON-LD valid (Y/N) ... Canonical normalized (Y/N) ... Hreflang reciprocal (Y/N)

### E) Readiness Index (0–100)

- Structure 0–20, Performance 0–20, Media 0–20, Metadata 0–20, Governance 0–20

## Contact & Next Steps

If your company operates in a high-traffic, highly regulated space and you need a tailored roadmap, implementation help, or governance design, contact: Danut Istrate — SEO/AI Readiness Consulting.

Web: <https://www.prahaconsulting.com>

Email: [danutistrate@prahaconsulting.com](mailto:danutistrate@prahaconsulting.com)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/danut-istrate/>