

Taking your exercise business online

Online is often the first place people look when researching small or local businesses. Therefore, a professional website is vital for any modern business. If you are creating a website for your fitness business or if you already have one, this resource guide will help you determine what is needed for a great fitness website.

We'll take you through the main factors that make up a successful website, from creating content that speaks to your target audience to choosing the right images and web address for your site. By the end of the guide, you will be able to create a website that stands out from your competitors.

Let's get started.

Determine your mission

The first place to start is by defining what the goal or mission of your website is. It is important to do this at the beginning as it will help to shape the content of your site. A successful and engaging website will have a simple and clear message that all visitors can understand.

The mission of your website is in essence what you want your website (or business) to accomplish. For example, it could be **"To help people get fit, stay healthy and learn how to lead wholesome lives"** or it could be **"To showcase my expertise and provide services to help people exercise"**.

Whatever your mission may be, make sure it is clear, concise and no more than one sentence long.

Learn more about your audience

The next step in the planning process is to understand your audience. It's important to identify who your audience is first of all, and then understand what their challenges are. Once you understand their challenges, you can tailor your website content to address them.

This is where personas come in. A persona is a fictional profile created by you that represents your ideal customer. It is created after conducting user research and will also take into account behavioural insight, such as the problems your audience is trying to solve and the challenges they face. Your website could encompass several different personas such as:

- A woman looking for fitness classes for herself
- A man looking for personal training for himself
- A parent looking for children's classes for their son or daughter

There could be many different personas for your website, but try to limit the options to two or three and be as specific as possible.

Personas can be created by simply talking to your target audience. Alternatively, you can send people a survey or post questions to your audience on Social Media. Once you have a greater understanding of your audience, you can start creating your personas.

Personas should include:

- Persona name
- Background
- Demographics
- Key characteristics
- Goals
- Challenges

Here's an example of what a persona could look like:

Once you have defined your online personas you will have a greater understanding of your audience. This will help you to develop web content that resonates with them and will improve the effectiveness of your website.

Continued overpage

Taking your exercise business online



Phil: a man between the ages of 25-35, mid- to high income, regularly runs and has competed in 10k and half marathon races. He's keen to improve his race times but is finding it difficult to go to the next level and is cautious about spending on training. He's driven and competitive and appreciates the expertise of others.

How people search for your website

Once you understand who your audience is and who you would like to attract to your website, the next thing to plan for is how visitors will find your website.

When building your site, you should consider how search engines will view it, as well as how real people will view it. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is an ongoing process, that improves the way search engines, such as Google, see your website. SEO is complex, but it is something you should plan for when building your website, not once it's live. The first place to start is with keywords.

Research and add keywords

Keywords are the words and phrases that internet users type into the search box of a search engine to find websites that match what they are looking for. It is important to put some time into thinking what customers will be searching for and what terms you would like your website to display for when people search.

Some keywords get a lot of searches compared to others but as a result are more competitive to optimise for. For example "**Personal Training**" may get hundreds of thousands of searches a day, whereas "**Personal Training in St Albans**" may not. As a general rule, the shorter the search terms, the higher the search volume. On the flip side, the longer the search term (or the more specific it is), the lower the search volume, these are known as "long tail" keywords and are often easier to optimise for and often generate better results and are generally more profitable.

First off, think about what your target audience may search for when looking for a website like yours. You can also conduct some keyword research using Google Adwords' Keyword Planner tool (free to use with a Google AdWords account), which will give you a rough indication of monthly search volumes for various search terms when you add in a list of keywords. Once you have decided on your keywords, speckle them into the content you write for your pages.

You could also create pages specifically targeted at one keyword. For example, you could have a page that is called "**Personal Training**" and integrate the keyword "**Personal Training in St Albans**".

Understanding Meta Data

As well as adding your keywords to your copy, you should add them to your website's meta data. Meta data is used to describe web pages to search engines. There are two main components:

- **Page Title (or Title Tag)** - Your site's Page Title is the heading that is displayed upon appearing within search results. A Page Title should be under 65 characters (including spaces) and should lead with the most important keyword. It should also include the name of your business and your location if relevant.
- **Description (or Meta Description)** - This also shows within search results, it's the snippet of descriptive text underneath the Page Title and URL. The Meta Description should also contain a targeted keyword and should describe concisely what the web page is about. The Meta Description should be between 150-170 characters and should not be stuffed with multiple keywords.

Taking your exercise business online

Develop an easy-to-use navigation

Once you know who your audience is and the keywords you would like to target, it's time to put it all together and make a website that flows. This is where website navigation comes in.

Navigation comprises of the links on the homepage that take you to other pages on a website. They either run horizontally along the top of the homepage or vertically down the side of the homepage. Modern sites tend to have fewer top-level navigation tabs, which makes the homepage look cleaner. These top-level tabs direct users to other pages on the website where users can find the content they need.

In order to decide on the navigation of your website, first work out what pages you need on your website. A Homepage and Contact page are givens, aside from those, think about what other pages you will need, perhaps even create a list. From there, you can decide which pages will go on the top-level navigation. Between three to five should suffice.

After you have decided on your top level navigation, you can then organise the other pages into a second-tier navigation layer by using submenus.

When organising the pages of your website, bear in mind the user journey. For example, the homepage is used more as an overview and submenu pages can contain the answers to more in-depth questions a visitor may have. One thing to remember, whatever navigation you decide on, make sure your contact information is obvious. If you sell online, make sure the path to purchase is as short as possible. A lead should never have to hunt to get in contact with you or unnecessarily click multiple times to purchase.

Create engaging website content

The content of your website is extremely important and will often determine how successful your site is. Website visitors on average spend 10 seconds assessing what your business is about and what it offers. In that short time, they decide whether they will stay on your website or not. Dedicate time towards your content.

Writing copy

Your copy should appeal to your audience and reflect your brand. Think back to the personas you created. Try to steer clear of jargon or industry language and terms that visitors may not understand. A conversational, natural tone tends to work well and will often sound more personable and appealing to your readers.

You can also communicate the benefits of the services you offer. Think about the challenges of your personas and write copy that solves the concerns or problems they face. Copy should not be focused on what you offer, but instead how the services you offer will help or benefit a potential client.

Here are a few copy examples. If you were a fitness novice which would appeal most to you?

Option A: I am a personal trainer specialising in the utilisation of heavy lifting and high cardio while maintaining a balanced CKD, high in amino acids while eliminating complex carbs to drop that BMI to an ideal number.

Option B: I am a personal trainer specialising in building your fitness transformation from the ground up. Together, we will create efficient workout routines paired with well-balanced meals specifically catered to you and your goals.

Option B is clear and concise and speaks to the benefits the personal trainer offers. It also avoids intimidating industry speak that could confuse a reader.

When writing for your website, make content easily digestible:

- Keeping sentences short
- Use bold or italics to highlight the important points you want to call out
- Use headings and paragraphs to break up text
- Use numbered lists or bullet points

Continued overpage

Taking your exercise business online

Choosing images

A great way of breaking up the copy on your website is by using imagery. A strong visual website is extremely appealing and will have an impact on web visitors. Carefully chosen images can help build your brand and make your website more memorable.

Try to use photos you've taken yourself, these will help to make your website unique. Make sure they are high quality, as poorly taken photos can negatively impact the appearance of your website. If real photos are not an option, stock photos provide a low cost option for website images and are royalty free.

When choosing images for your website, consider these points:

- Is the image relevant to the content on your web page?
- Does the image look authentic and natural?
- Is the image believable?
- Does the image look like it was taken today?
- Is the image clear and good quality?
- Is this the first time you've seen the image?

Starting your blog

Creating content for your website should not be a one-off occurrence, once you have your website live, keep adding good quality content to it. A great way to do this is by starting a blog.

A blog is a good way to keep web visitors and clients engaged. It is also a great way to show off your expertise. Research has shown that custom content instils confidence in web visitors. According to [Content Plus] 60% of consumers feel more positive about a company after reading custom content on its site.

Not only are blogs good for engaging your clients, they are also good for search engines. Search engines love to see fresh new content, as well as external sites linking to it. The more content and external links you have, the more favourably search engines will view your website.

If you are in need of inspiration, here are a few blog content ideas:

- Business news
- New services offered
- Health studies
- Nutritional advice
- Exercise guides
- Industry trends
- Client testimonials
- Dos and Don'ts when training

If you choose to start a blog, set realistic goals and stick to them. Writing two blog posts a month consistently is better than writing one every day for a week and then stopping.

Keep checking in your website to make sure the information you provide is accurate. This includes making sure your office hours and prices are up-to-date.

Taking your exercise business online

Build a website within budget

Next is to determine the budget for your website, especially since cost is often an influencing factor. Website builders are the cheaper and, often, more effective option for small businesses. The cost of hiring a web designer, for example, varies hugely. Employing a web designer and using a website builder both have pros and cons associated with them. The grid below analyses the main advantages and drawbacks of each option to help you choose the right option for your business.

	Web designer	Website builder
Pros	Good for complex websites	Affordable
	Professional expertise	Easy to make changes
		Faster build time
		Control of your website post launch
Cons	Expensive	Difficult to 100% customise
	Multiple revisions can be time-consuming	

A website could cost anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand pounds. Many web designers also charge on an hourly basis. If you choose this option, make sure the project is carefully thought-out and the budget and scope are confirmed before work begins. You don't want any nasty surprises.

You will also want to provide your web designer with a set of requirements along with your budget. This will allow them to determine whether your expectations are realistic given your budget and reduce or increase the scope of the project if necessary.

Website builders are a good, low-cost alternative to having a custom website built by a web designer. You can create a website for free using a website builder like Yola to see if it's the right tool for your business.

How to use a custom domain

A web address is a hugely important factor in creating a successful online presence for your business.

Website builders provide users with a free subdomain, a domain name that is not uniquely private (i.e. a domain that is secondary to a larger domain). Here's an example of a subdomain: www.hertfordshirepersonaltrainer.yolasite.com. The "yolasite" portion is something that will be shared amongst many others who also publish from this website builder. This may be fine if you are creating a wedding website or are just testing. However, having your own domain (e.g. www.hertfordshirepersonaltrainer.co.uk) is ideal for visibility and business credibility.

Using a custom domain over a subdomain has a lot of benefits:

- They look more professional and add credibility
- They are shorter and easier to remember
- They improve name recognition
- Search engines view them more favourably than subdomains

Custom domains range in price, but are normally around **£7.95 for a .COM extension, or £6.95 for a .CO.UK extension**. Conversely, you can get a web address for free by subscribing to a yearly package from a website builder. Otherwise, you will have to budget separately for a domain and hosting package as many designers only provide web design and do not include this important aspect in their fees.

Taking your exercise business online

When choosing a domain name, the extension is important. If you are a locally based UK business, then a .CO.UK domain could help your search rankings in the UK. If you are a charitable organisation, then a .ORG is suitable. If you have an international presence or would like to look like a large business, a .COM is a good option.

When choosing your domain name, consider these points carefully:

- **Length** - Try to keep the web address short
- **Relevancy** - Choose a domain name that reflects what your website is about
- **Keywords** - Adding a keyword to your domain name will help to explain what your business offers

As a general rule, try to avoid hyphens and underscores in your domain name. These tend to look spammy and are also easily forgotten when someone is typing the URL.

Summary

Here are the top 10 tips to create an online presence for your business:

- 1 **Choose between a web designer or a website builder**
- 2 **Define the mission of your website**
- 3 **Create three personas that represent your audience**
- 4 **What search terms will drive you traffic**
- 5 **Work your keywords into your meta data and copy**
- 6 **Plan the navigation and what pages your website needs**
- 7 **Write copy that speaks to your audience and is easily digestible**
- 8 **Source high-quality, authentic images**
- 9 **Publish blog posts regularly and consistently**
- 10 **Secure a custom domain for your business**

This resource guide has been put together courtesy of Yola Inc.

About Yola Inc.

Yola is a free website builder for small businesses, non-profits and everyday users to painlessly build and publish a professional website. When users are ready to grow, Yola helps them establish and develop an online presence without hassle or high cost with our premium packages.

