HC Web Labs

Heather Cooper — Web Design & Development

CLIENT WELCOME GUIDE

Your getting-started guide — everything you need to know before we begin.

Thank you so much for choosing HC Web Labs for your project! I'm thrilled to be working with you and can't wait to bring your vision to life — whether that means building something brand new or jumping into a site you already have. This guide walks you through what to expect from start to finish. If you have any questions along the way, don't hesitate to reach out.

1. Wherever You're Starting From

HC Web Labs works with clients at any starting point, and the process below flexes depending on which one fits you:

- **Starting Fresh** — you don't have a website yet, or want a full rebuild from a blank canvas.
- **Already Have a Site** — you have an existing website, hosting account, or platform (WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, hand-coded, or anything else) and want it redesigned, extended, or improved.
- **Just Need Something Fixed** — your site mostly works, but something's broken, slow, or not displaying right, and you want it diagnosed and resolved.
- **Ongoing Care (Webmaster)** — your site is done and live, and you'd like someone keeping an eye on it going forward.

None of these paths require you to start over or abandon work you've already put in.

2. The Process

For Starting Fresh or Already Have a Site projects:

- **Free Consultation** — Every project starts here, at no cost and with no obligation. We'll talk through your goals, your business, your audience, and your vision, so I understand exactly what you need. If you already have a site, this includes a look at what's there now. The consultation is free whether or not you've already had a free website review — those are two separate things, and both are free.
- **Statement of Work & Agreement** — I'll send a custom Statement of Work (SOW) outlining the engagement type, scope, timeline, and cost. Once you're happy with it, we'll sign the Master Service Agreement (MSA) and your SOW through BoldSign.
- **Deposit & Kickoff** — A 50% deposit secures your spot and kicks off the project. The rest is split into two milestones — 25% at design/scope approval, and 25% at launch.
- **Gather Materials** — I'll send a checklist tailored to your starting point (see Section 3 below).
- **Design Phase** — Mockups or design drafts for your review, with two rounds of revisions.
- **Development Phase** — Custom-coded build (or in-platform work, for existing sites), with one round of revisions.

- **Testing & Soft Launch** — Cross-browser and device testing, then a soft launch so you can see it live before the official debut.
- **Final Payment & Launch** — Once you approve the soft launch and final payment clears, we go live.
- **Post-Launch Support** — A complimentary support window (7–14 days) for minor tweaks and bug fixes from the original build.

For Just Need Something Fixed projects:

- **Quick Diagnosis** — You describe the issue; I take a look and, on request, provide an itemized time-and-cost estimate.
- **Fix & Retest** — I resolve the issue and verify it's actually fixed before calling it done — retesting is included, not billed separately.
- **Sign-Off** — You confirm the issue is resolved, and the engagement is billed for time worked (one-hour minimum).

3. What I'll Need from You

If you're Starting Fresh:

- Logo files (PNG, SVG, or JPEG — high resolution preferred).
- Brand colors (hex codes if you have them, or examples you like).
- Brand fonts (or preferences/examples).
- Website copy (About, Services, Contact, etc.).
- Photos and images.
- Hosting account credentials (if you already have hosting) and domain registrar credentials.
- Social media links, inspiration websites, and business information (address, phone, hours).

If you Already Have a Site (redesign, extension, or fix):

- Admin access to your current platform, CMS, or page builder — shared through a secure method, never plain text.
- Hosting access, if separate from your platform login.
- A quick rundown of what's working, what's not, and what you'd like to keep vs. change.
- A recent backup of your site, if you have one (I can help you create one if not).

Tip: Don't have everything on your list? No problem — just let me know what you're missing and we'll figure it out together.

4. Tools We'll Use

- **Wave** — Invoicing & Payments. All invoices come through Wave with a secure link — no account needed.
- **Email, Phone & Text** — Communication. I'm flexible and aim to respond within one business day.
- **Email** — File Sharing. Send project files directly by email; I'll tell you exactly what I need and when.

- **BoldSign** — Digital Signatures. All agreements (MSA, SOW, Change Orders) are sent through BoldSign — just an email link, legally binding.
- **Preview Links** — See your site take shape during development, hosted on my server, GitHub Pages, or CodePen.

5. Tips for a Smooth Project

- Gather materials (or admin access) early — the sooner I have them, the faster we move.
- Consolidate your feedback into one list per round rather than many small messages.
- Respond within review windows — I'll give you at least 5 business days to review each draft.
- Be honest and open. If something doesn't feel right, tell me — I'd rather adjust than have you end up with something you don't love.
- Ask questions anytime. There's no such thing as a silly question.

6. Quick FAQ

Do you only build from scratch, or can you work with my existing WordPress, Squarespace, or other site?

Both, happily. HC Web Labs works across any hosting account or platform — WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, hand-coded, or anything else. If you've already invested time and money into a platform, I'm not going to tell you to throw it away; I'll work within it. If you're starting fresh, I'll build something clean and custom-coded from the ground up.

What if my site already exists and just needs a fix, not a redesign?

That's its own lightweight path — Debugging & Optimization. It's billed hourly at $60/hour ($85/hour for rush requests), with a one-hour minimum. Diagnosis, the fix, and retesting are all included in the billed time. I'm happy to provide an itemized estimate up front so you know roughly what to expect.

How long will my project take?

It depends on scope — and on how quickly materials, access, and feedback come back from you. A one-page Launch Page is delivered within a week; a three-page Small Business Site in one to two weeks; a five-page Studio Build in one to two weeks. Priority scheduling is available on any build for an additional 44%. These ranges are situational, not fixed — your SOW will include a timeline estimate built around your project's specific scope. Debugging & Optimization doesn't really run on a calendar timeline — it's billed hourly, and most single-issue fixes resolve within the same session.

What if I need changes after the site launches?

You'll have a complimentary support window (7–14 days) for minor tweaks. After that, support is billed at my current hourly rate ($60/hour), or you can enroll in a Webmaster Services Agreement (WMSA) for ongoing care.

Can I update the website myself?

If your project includes a content management system or editable content areas, yes — and I'm happy to walk you through it.

What if I need to pause or cancel the project?

Life happens! Just let me know in writing. Details on pauses, refunds, and cancellations are in the MSA, including a pause option if you need to step back for a little while.

Can you manage my website after it's done?

Absolutely. After launch, you can self-manage (I hand off all files and you or someone you hire takes it from there), or hire me as your webmaster for $99/month — uptime and certificate monitoring, a monthly QA check, monthly backups, security patches, and 30 minutes of minor updates each month. You still own everything; I just take care of it. See the WMSA for full details.

Let's Get Started!

I'm so excited to work with you, wherever your website is starting from. If you have any questions before we dive in, reach out anytime — I can't wait to see what we create.

HC Web Labs · webmaster@heather-cooper.com · (865) 356-3769 · heather-cooper.com