Switching hosts checklist

Move a WordPress site to a new host without losing email, SSL, data or rankings: inventory, rehearse, cut over, then wait.

Check off each item as you go. Keep a printed copy somewhere other than your computer.

INVENTORY FIRST

- [ ] Export the full DNS zone: A, AAAA, CNAME, MX, TXT (SPF, verification records), CAA, SRV.
- [ ] Find DKIM selectors (s= in a sent email's DKIM-Signature header), then dig TXT [selector]._domainkey.example.com.
- [ ] Run dig +short MX example.com and dig TXT _dmarc.example.com. Know where mail lives.
- [ ] List subdomains, cron jobs, server redirects and anything outside WordPress in the web root.
- [ ] Record PHP version and extensions (php -v, php -m), memory limit and upload size.

PREPARE THE NEW HOST

- [ ] Lower TTL on records you will change to 300 seconds, at least one old TTL ahead (24 to 48 hours).
- [ ] Take a full backup of files and database and store it off both servers.
- [ ] Match or improve the PHP version and extensions on the new server.
- [ ] Copy files, import the database. Domain or path changed? wp search-replace with --dry-run first.
- [ ] Recreate cron jobs and any server-level redirects or rules.

REHEARSE BEFORE DNS

- [ ] Point your hosts file at the new IP and test the site on its real domain.
- [ ] Test logins, forms, search, checkout, uploads and wp-admin on the new server.
- [ ] Have SSL ready: DNS validation, a copied certificate, or issuance within minutes of cutover.
- [ ] Freeze content changes, or plan a final database sync just before cutover.

CUT OVER

- [ ] Change only A/AAAA and website CNAMEs. Leave MX and mail records alone unless mail moves.
- [ ] Moving DNS hosts too? Recreate every record and compare zones before changing nameservers.
- [ ] Check dig +short example.com @8.8.8.8 and the authoritative nameservers.
- [ ] Confirm a valid certificate, the expected 200/301 codes via curl -I, and purge all caches and CDN.

AFTER THE MOVE

- [ ] Send test mail to two major providers. SPF, DKIM and DMARC must pass. Add the new server to SPF if it sends mail.
- [ ] Watch logs and Search Console for 404s and errors for a week. Confirm new backups run.
- [ ] Keep the old host for at least 7 days, until its logs show no more traffic.
- [ ] Raise TTL back (3600 is common). Take a final backup, then cancel the old host last.