

The \$10K Checklist.

EIGHT THINGS THAT SEPARATE A \$10K WEBSITE FROM A \$200 ONE.

01

Point of view, not a template.

The site commits to a specific design direction — brutalist, editorial, dark-luxury, retro-modern, whatever — and executes it without flinching. A \$200 site is generic. A \$10K site has taste.

02

Typography that does work.

A paired display + body face, neither of them Inter or Roboto. Scale and weight carry hierarchy. The headlines feel chosen, not defaulted.

03

A restrained color system.

Three to five colors, used consistently. No rainbow palettes. Premium signals through restraint, not decoration.

04

Hierarchy that breathes.

Whitespace, scale, and contrast tell the viewer where to look without effort. The page has a clear primary, secondary, tertiary — no flat walls of content.

05

Imagery with intent.

Not Unsplash defaults everyone's seen. Either custom photography, generated assets that match the art direction, or curation tight enough that the images feel commissioned.

06

Motion that whispers.

Micro-interactions and scroll behavior feel hand-crafted, not AOS-fade-up slop. The bar: a designer would nod, not roll their eyes.

07

Mobile that's designed, not shrunk.

Layout decisions for phone are different from desktop, not the desktop version compressed. This is where 90% of cheap sites collapse.

08

The invisible expensive stuff.

Sub-2s load, WCAG AA contrast, keyboard navigation, semantic HTML, real meta tags. Viewers don't see it directly but they feel "this site is fast and works" — the felt difference between expensive and cheap.