BFCM 2026 · FREE PLAYBOOK

The traffic is coming. Is your store technically ready?

Twelve checks across four parts — the same sequence a senior engineer works through in a paid readiness audit. Every one of them is something you can verify on your own store this week.

12	04	27 Nov	30 Nov
Checks	Parts	Black Friday 2026	Cyber Monday 2026

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Senior-only Shopify Plus development & retention · 400+ stores · $120m+ GMV · 4.9★ Trustpilot

HOW TO USE THIS

Read it with the store open.

Each check is written so you can verify it yourself. Work through them in order — the parts build on each other, and there is no point tuning a checkout nobody can reach. If any answer is “I think so”, that is the one to look at first.

Nothing here is held back. This PDF is the same twelve checks published in full at aqsashahzad.com/bfcm-2026-shopify-readiness-audit/, formatted so you can hand it to a developer or forward it to whoever signs off the work.

PART 01 · SPEED

01

What the store weighs when it matters

Every store is fast in August. Peak week is decided by what your product and collection templates do on a mid-range phone, on a congested network, at four hundred sessions an hour — measured on real visitors rather than a lab run from an empty office.

PART 01 · CHECK 1 OF 3

Core Web Vitals on real field data

Lab scores flatter you: a synthetic run on a fast connection from a nearby server is not the experience you are shipping. Field data from actual Chrome users is the only number that predicts peak behaviour, because it already contains the slow phones and the bad networks.

READY WHEN

- LCP at or under 2.5s
- INP at or under 200ms
- CLS at or under 0.1
- Measured on mobile, not desktop

PART 01 · CHECK 2 OF 3

The templates that actually carry the traffic

Almost everyone optimises the homepage, and almost nobody lands there during a sale. Your paid and email traffic arrives on product and collection pages. Those are the templates that decide the week, and they are usually the heaviest in the theme.

READY WHEN

- Product template on mobile
- Collection template with filters applied
- Cart and the step before checkout
- The landing page your ads point at

PART 01 · CHECK 3 OF 3

What blocks the first paint

Hero media that is lazy-loaded, fonts that arrive after the text, and third-party scripts sitting on the critical path. Each is individually defensible and collectively the reason a well-built theme measures badly.

READY WHEN

- Hero image sized and never lazy-loaded
- Fonts preloaded, with a real fallback
- No render-blocking third-party script
- Above-the-fold content in the first response

PART 02 · STACK

02

The apps nobody has audited since last November

Apps get installed for a test, a campaign, or a previous agency, and then keep injecting storefront JavaScript long after anyone remembers why. Individually each one is small. Together they are the single most common reason a fast theme measures slow.

PART 02 · CHECK 1 OF 3

The storefront script audit

List every app that injects JavaScript into the storefront, what it does, who asked for it, and what it costs in main-thread blocking time. Then decide, per app, whether it earns its place through peak. Most stores find at least three that do not.

READY WHEN

- Every script has a named owner
- Every script has a reason
- Blocking time measured, not guessed
- Anything unclaimed is removed or deferred

PART 02 · CHECK 2 OF 3

Theme freeze and a rollback you have tested

A dated freeze, a published theme you can revert to in one action, and one named person allowed to break the freeze. On the day, the plan matters more than the code: the question is never whether something will go wrong, it is how fast you can undo it.

READY WHEN

- Freeze date agreed and in the calendar
- Rollback theme published and verified
- One named person can approve an exception
- Every change after the freeze has an undo

PART 02 · CHECK 3 OF 3

Caching, CDN and traffic that is not human

Cache hit rate under load, image formats and weights, and how much of your peak traffic is bots, scrapers and monitoring rather than shoppers. That last number surprises people, and it changes what your infrastructure has to survive.

READY WHEN

- Cache behaviour checked under load
- Images in modern formats, correctly sized
- Bot share of traffic measured
- Third parties off the critical path

PART 03 · CHECKOUT

03

The promotion nobody placed as a real order

Discount logic behaves differently once it meets a real cart: stacked codes, gift-with-purchase, bundles, subscriptions, free-shipping thresholds and a second currency. Most stores validate the offer in a spreadsheet and discover the edge cases live, from customer emails.

PART 03 · CHECK 1 OF 3

Place the promotion as a real order

Not a preview, not a staging approximation: real carts, real combinations, on a throttled mobile connection. Include the combinations you did not design for, because your customers will find them within the first hour and post them.

READY WHEN

- Stacked codes tested together
- Gift-with-purchase and bundles
- Subscription and one-off in one cart
- Every market and currency you sell into

PART 03 · CHECK 2 OF 3

Inventory and fulfilment sync at peak velocity

Your sync interval was set for a normal week. At peak velocity the gap between sold and synced is where oversells live, along with ERP, 3PL and marketplace webhooks that retry silently, or not at all.

READY WHEN

- Sync interval known, not assumed
- Oversell exposure quantified at peak rate
- Failed webhook behaviour understood
- Someone is watching the queue on the day

PART 03 · CHECK 3 OF 3

Checkout extensibility and payment edge cases

Any remaining legacy checkout customisation, plus the express wallets, local methods and B2B terms that only some of your customers use. These fail quietly for a segment rather than loudly for everyone, which is why they survive until November.

READY WHEN

- No legacy checkout customisation left running
- Express wallets tested end to end
- Local payment methods verified per market
- B2B and net terms still work under load

PART 04 · DATA

04

The tracking that quietly stops attributing

A consent change, a duplicated pixel or a broken server-side event does not throw an error. It moves revenue into "direct" — and you spend the most expensive week of the year making budget decisions from numbers that are quietly wrong.

PART 04 · CHECK 1 OF 3

One purchase, counted exactly once

Place a single test order and follow it. It should appear once in GA4, once in the Meta conversions API and once in Klaviyo, with the right value and the right currency. Duplicates inflate ROAS, and inflated ROAS is how brands overspend into a bad week.

READY WHEN

- One order, one event, in every platform
- Correct value and currency everywhere
- No client and server double-count
- Order ID deduplication actually working

PART 04 · CHECK 2 OF 3

Both consent states, and the server-side path

Most tracking is verified once, by someone who accepted every cookie. Test the other path too: the visitor who declines, the visitor in a stricter region, and whatever your server-side layer does when the browser sends nothing.

READY WHEN

- Tested with consent granted and denied
- Consent mode behaving as configured
- Server-side events firing independently
- No silent gap between the two paths

PART 04 · CHECK 3 OF 3

Retention capture and sending reputation

Peak is the cheapest list growth of the year and the easiest week to burn a sending domain. Capture has to be live and tested, core flows switched on, and the volume ramp planned rather than discovered on the second send.

READY WHEN

- Capture live and tested on mobile
- Welcome, browse and abandon flows on
- Sending volume ramp planned in advance
- Segmentation ready before the list doubles

WHAT TO DO, AND WHEN

The calendar decides what advice is honest.

The same finding gets a different recommendation in September than it does in November. Any audit that ignores the date is selling you a project rather than a peak week.

SEP

Rebuild window

CHANGE FREELY

The only month where structural work is still safe: theme refactors, app removals, template rewrites, migration decisions.

OCT

Fix and test window

CHANGE CAREFULLY

Targeted fixes, promotion logic built and tested end to end, tracking verified, load and fulfilment paths rehearsed.

NOV

Freeze and rehearse

CHANGE RARELY

Freeze roughly two weeks before Black Friday. After that, only provable revenue bugs get touched, and every change has a rollback.

27–30

Trade and watch

DO NOT CHANGE

Monitoring, not building: conversion by device, checkout errors, sync failures, sending health, and a named person on call.

RUN THEM YOURSELF, FREE

Six tools that cover part of this playbook.

Built by our own specialist agencies — ForgeCRO for audits and CRO, RetentionControl for retention. No card, no call.

Free Shopify CRO Audit	forgecro.com/request-a-free-cro-audit/
BFCM Retention Audit	retentioncontrol.com/bfcm-2026-by-retention-control/
Shopify SEO Audit	forgecro.com/free-tools/shopify-seo-audit/
AI Visibility Audit	forgecro.com/free-tools/ai-visibility-audit/
Retention ROI Calculator	retentioncontrol.com/roi-calculator/
Shopify Plus Migration Cost	forgecro.com/free-tools/shopify-plus-migration-cost/

Want a person to run all twelve on your store?

The manual audit is one senior engineer, three to five working days, your actual store. A written report ranked by revenue risk, a freeze date for your stack, and a 45-minute walkthrough.

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