Landing Page Design Rules

CTA word: DESIGN

A founder-facing skill pack for shipping high-converting landing pages for AI products and B2B offers. Use it yourself, or hand it to an AI as the skill file so it stops inventing a look you never asked for.

No fake case studies. No magic conversion rates. Just the rules that keep pages readable, credible, and aimed at one action.

What's inside:

- Reference rules — stop the AI inventing a look
- Inputs checklist — what you must decide before generation starts
- Build order — copy inventory → live publish
- Exact-copy rules — approved lines ship 1:1
- Hard specs — type, spacing, CTA size, mobile
- Section rules — hero through FAQ
- Quality gates + failure modes — pass/fail before you ship

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1. Why AI landing pages look broken

Most AI-built pages fail in under a second of looking. Not because models can't write HTML. Because you handed them nothing to match.

Two failure modes:

1. Zero references — no palette, no type scale, no competitor pages, no approved proof. The model invents pastel cards and soft gradients.
2. One-line prompts — "make a landing page for my AI ops tool." It guesses audience, CTA, and layout.

The fix is a skill file: references + inputs + build order + hard specs + gates. That is this pack.

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2. Reference library rules (hold every build to these)

1. Pick 3–5 reference pages in your category (or adjacent B2B) before generation. Save screenshots + URLs.
2. Extract from each reference: hero layout, CTA placement, proof style, section order, mobile behavior.
3. Write a one-page look contract: light or dark, primary color hex, accent hex, max two fonts, corner radius, button style (solid / outline / soft).
4. Ban "AI default" looks: purple gradients on white, floating glass cards with no hierarchy, stock smiling teams, fake 3D product blobs.
5. Prefer one strong product UI shot over five decorative illustrations.
6. If the product is API/agent, show a real transcript, dashboard, or terminal — not a metaphor image.

7. Keep brand marks tiny. The page sells the outcome, not the logo.
8. Match density to buyer: enterprise B2B = quieter, more proof; PLG consumer-ish AI = faster hero, sharper demo.
9. Every section must exist for a reason you can say in one sentence. Kill decorative sections.
10. When the AI proposes a new visual motif mid-build, reject it unless it is in the look contract.

Reference checklist

- ☐ 3–5 reference URLs saved
- ☐ Look contract written (palette, type, radius, button)
- ☐ At least one real product visual ready
- ☐ Banned motifs listed

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3. Inputs checklist (decide before the model starts)

11. Buyer — job title + company size + one situation (not "anyone who wants AI").
12. Job to be done — the painful weekly task this page is about.
13. Primary CTA — one verb + destination (book demo / start trial / join waitlist / download).
14. Secondary CTA — optional, quieter; never competes with primary.
15. Offer line — what they get in exchange for the click (15-min walkthrough, sandbox, PDF, etc.).
16. Proof assets — logos, quotes, metrics you are allowed to show (real only; invent nothing).
17. Objections — top 3 reasons they won't click today.
18. Publish route — domain, CMS or static host, analytics ID, form destination.
19. Legal — privacy link, terms if you collect email, "results vary" if you show outcomes.
20. Out of scope — features you will not claim on this page.

Inputs gate (do not generate until checked)

- ☐ Buyer + JTBD written
- ☐ One primary CTA URL works
- ☐ Proof assets collected or marked "none yet"
- ☐ Publish route known
- ☐ Out-of-scope list written

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4. Build order (21 steps)

Do these in order. Skipping ahead is how you get pretty pages that don't convert.

21. Inventory approved copy (headline options, subheads, bullets, CTA labels) in a plain doc.
22. Lock the look contract and reference set.
23. Wireframe sections on paper or a blank doc: hero → proof → how it works → use cases

→ objection handling → final CTA.
24. Write the hero first. If the hero is weak, stop — do not decorate a bad promise.
25. Write CTA labels next (button text is part of the offer).
26. Add proof under the hero only if you have real logos or a short quote.
27. Draft "how it works" in 3 steps max.
28. Draft 2–4 use cases as buyer situations, not feature names.
29. Draft FAQ from the objection list.
30. Generate layout against the look contract (not freeform).
31. Drop in exact approved copy — no "improvements."
32. Size type and spacing to the hard specs below.
33. Build mobile first pass (390px width).
34. Build desktop pass.
35. Hook forms / calendar / trial start; test empty + filled states.
36. Add analytics events on CTA clicks and form submit.
37. Accessibility pass: contrast, focus rings, alt text, heading order.
38. Performance pass: compress images, lazy-load below fold, kill unused fonts.
39. Soft launch on a staging URL; click every CTA yourself.
40. Publish; verify the public URL, OG tags, and favicon.
41. Day-1 check: form deliveries, calendar bookings, or trial starts actually arrive.

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5. Exact-copy rules

42. Approved lines ship 1:1. The model may not "punch up," shorten, or add adjectives.
43. Mark every line in the copy doc as LOCKED or DRAFT. Only LOCKED goes on the page.
44. Numbers need a source you can defend. No "10x" or "99%" without one.
45. Product names and feature names match the product UI exactly.
46. CTA button text matches the destination ("Book a demo" → calendar; "Start free" → signup).
47. Never let the model invent customer names, logos, or quotes.
48. If copy is missing, leave a visible TODO: rather than filler lorem that ships.
49. One idea per sentence in the hero. No semicolon essays.
50. Prefer concrete verbs: ship, cut, route, approve, reconcile — not "empower" / "unlock" / "streamline."

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6. Hard specs (type, space, CTA)

Use these unless your look contract overrides with a reason.

51. Desktop H1: 48px, weight 700, line-height 1.1, max ~10 words.
52. Mobile H1: 32px, same weight, still one screen without scroll for the promise + CTA.
53. Body: 16px desktop and mobile, line-height 1.5–1.6, max measure ~65 characters.
54. Section H2: 28–32px desktop, 24px mobile.
55. Card padding: 24px minimum; do not crush text against edges.
56. Primary CTA button: min height 48px; min width 600px on desktop hero when it is the only action, or full-width on mobile; corner radius matches look contract.

57. Tap targets: 44×44px minimum on mobile for every clickable.
58. Section vertical rhythm: 64–96px between major sections on desktop; 48–64px on mobile.
59. Contrast: body text ≥ 4.5:1 on background; large headlines ≥ 3:1.
60. Max content width: ~720px for text-heavy blocks; ~1120px for multi-column feature grids.
61. Images: real UI at 2x, compressed; no stretched screenshots.
62. Sticky header: if used, keep under 64px and do not hide the hero CTA on mobile.

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7. Section rules

Hero

63. One promise, one audience cue, one primary CTA. Subhead explains the mechanism in one line.
64. Put the product visual on the side or below — never instead of the promise.
65. Social proof strip under hero only if logos are real and permissioned.

How it works

66. Exactly 3 steps. Each step: verb + object. No marketing poetry.

Use cases

67. Name the buyer situation ("ops lead after a second warehouse opens"), not the feature codename.

Proof

68. Prefer one specific quote with role + company over five vague stars.
69. Metrics need a timeframe and a definition (what was counted).

Objections / FAQ

70. Answer the fear that blocks the click: security, setup time, data access, pricing shape, "will this replace my team."
71. Short answers. Link out for deep security pages.

Final CTA

72. Repeat the same primary CTA. Do not invent a new offer at the bottom.
73. Restate the offer line and what happens after the click.

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8. Quality gates (pass/fail before publish)

Gate A — Promise: a stranger can say what you sell and who it's for after 5 seconds.
Gate B — Single CTA: one primary action; secondary is visually quieter.
Gate C — Copy fidelity: every on-page line matches LOCKED copy.
Gate D — Mobile: no horizontal overflow; CTA reachable without zoom; forms usable.
Gate E — Contrast & type: meets hard specs; no light-gray body on white.
Gate F — Proof honesty: no invented logos, quotes, or numbers.

Gate G — Destination: every CTA and form hits a working URL or inbox.
Gate H — Perf & a11y: LCP reasonable on 4G; images have alt; focus visible.

Pre-publish checklist

- ☐ Gates A–H all pass
- ☐ Staging clicked end-to-end
- ☐ OG title/description/image set
- ☐ Analytics firing on CTA
- ☐ Legal links present if you collect data

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9. Known failure modes + fixes

— Failure — Fix
1 — White/light text on light background — Enforce contrast gate; set explicit body color in look contract
2 — Page overflows on phone load — Mobile-first pass at 390px; ban fixed widths > 100%
3 — Multiple CTAs to different destinations — One primary URL; demote or delete the rest
4 — Model "improved" copy that converts worse — Exact-copy rules; LOCKED lines only
5 — Generic purple AI aesthetic — Reference library + banned motifs
6 — Hero is feature list, not promise — Rewrite hero before any polish
7 — Fake testimonials — Delete; use logos you own or no proof strip
8 — CTA says "Learn more" to nowhere useful — Name the next step and wire the URL
9 — Form with 8 fields — Ask email + one qualifier max for first step
10 — Auto-play video with sound — Click-to-play; captions on
11 — Pricing tease with no path — Either show price band or remove the tease
12 — Broken mobile menu covering CTA — Test sticky + menu open state
13 — Slow hero image killing LCP — Compress; size attributes; priority load hero only

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10. Prompt stub (paste with this pack)

Use when handing the pack to an AI builder:

You are building a landing page under the Landing Page Design Rules skill pack.
Obey the look contract, inputs checklist, exact-copy rules, hard specs, and quality gates.
Do not invent proof, metrics, or copy marked missing.
Output: section wireframe → locked copy placement → layout notes → checklist of gates A–H.
Buyer: [ ]
JTBD: [ ]
Primary CTA + URL: [ ]
Look contract: [ ]
LOCKED copy doc: [ ]
References: [ ]

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11. One-page ship checklist (print this)

- ☐ Inputs complete (buyer, JTBD, CTA, proof, publish route)
- ☐ References + look contract attached
- ☐ Build order 21–41 followed
- ☐ Hard specs applied (type, padding, CTA width, contrast)
- ☐ Exact copy only
- ☐ Gates A–H passed
- ☐ Failure modes 1–13 scanned
- ☐ Live URL verified on phone + desktop

Optional footer: built for founders shipping AI and B2B offers. Use freely.