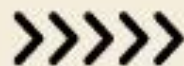


THE ULTIMATE

SEO CHEAT SHEET

Drive tons of FREE traffic to your website and grow your business



How to use this SEO checklist

Think of this checklist like a shopping list of ingredients for a delicious chocolate cake.

You need all the ingredients to make a perfect cake. But some are more important than others.

Forget the chocolate, and your cake won't be very chocolatey. Forget the optional drizzle of vanilla extract on the other hand and your cake will likely still taste pretty darn good.

What I'm saying is this:

You **don't** need to implement *everything* on this checklist. Just follow the key advice from each subsection and do your best.

That will often be more than enough to outrank the competition.

Got it? Let's go.

Basic SEO Checklist

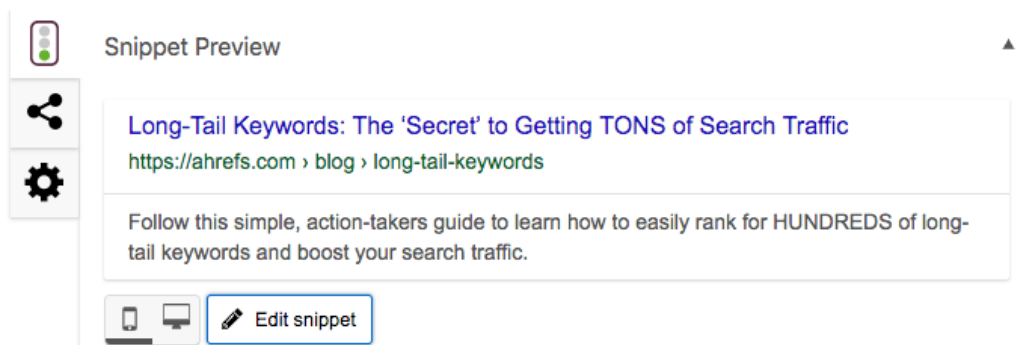
Let's begin with the SEO best practices that you should employ before doing anything else.

Note that these things are unlikely to have a direct effect on rankings. They're just the basics that every website owner should have in the bag.

1. Install Yoast SEO (or a similar SEO plugin)

[Yoast SEO](#) is a free SEO plugin for WordPress and a few other CMS'.

Functionality-wise, it does *a lot*—create sitemaps, optimize metadata, apply “noindex” attributes to specific areas of your site, and much more.





In other words, it makes the daunting technical stuff less daunting.

Sidenote. [All in One SEO Pack](#) and [The SEO Framework](#) are other popular Yoast alternatives for WordPress. If you're not using WordPress or any of the other CMS' supported by Yoast, then head over to Google and look for the "best SEO plugin for [your CMS]."

2. Create a sitemap

Sitemaps tell search engines where to find the important content on your site (which they can then [crawl and index](#)).

You can usually find yours at *yourdomain.com/sitemap.xml*.

How do you create one? If you're a WordPress user, use Yoast. Otherwise, there are many sitemap generators around—Google it!

3. Create and add a *robots.txt* file to your site

Robots.txt is a plain text file that instructs search engines where they can and can't go on your site. It will look something like this:

```
Sitemap: https://www.example.com/uk/sitemap.xml

# global
User-agent: *
Disallow: /xmlrpc.php

User-agent: *
Disallow: /billing/
```

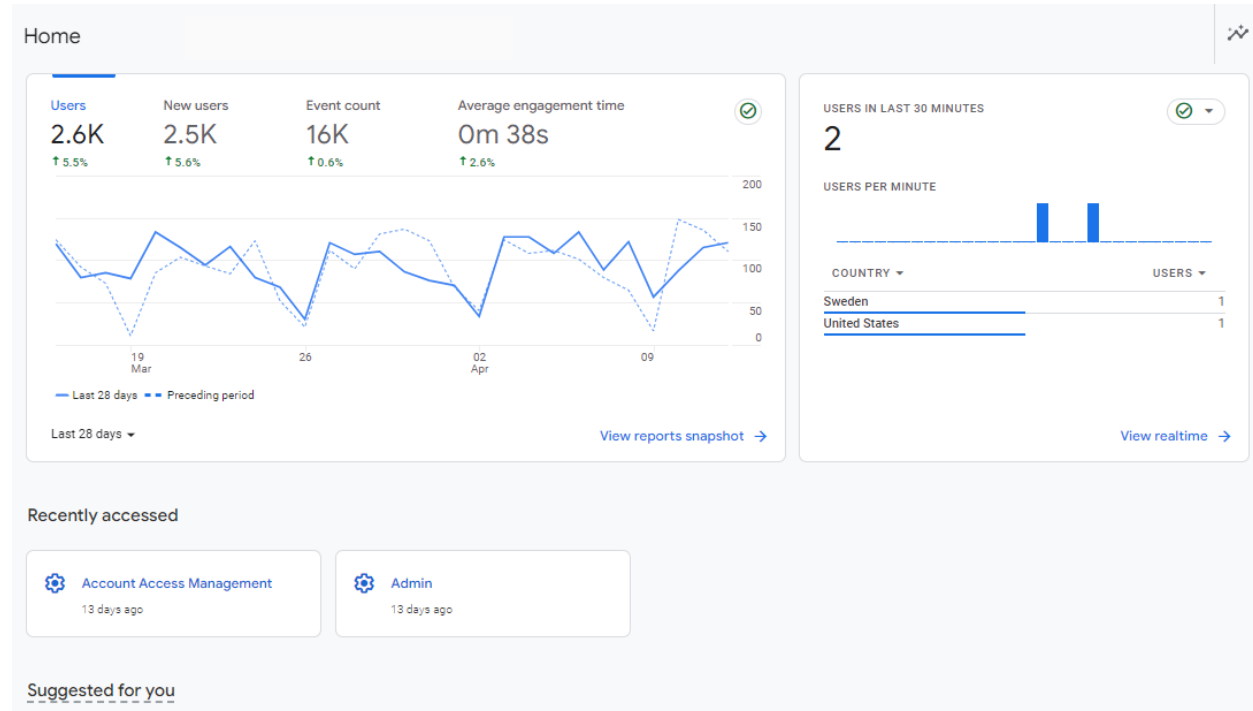
You can see that this particular robots.txt file includes a link to the sitemap (which tells search engines where to find it) followed by some directives instructing search engines not to crawl or index any web pages with "/billing/" in the URL.

WordPress users can use Yoast to create and optimize their robots.txt file.

PRO TIP: Check to see if you already have a robots.txt file on your site by navigating to *yourdomain.com/robots.txt*.

4. Install Google Analytics 4

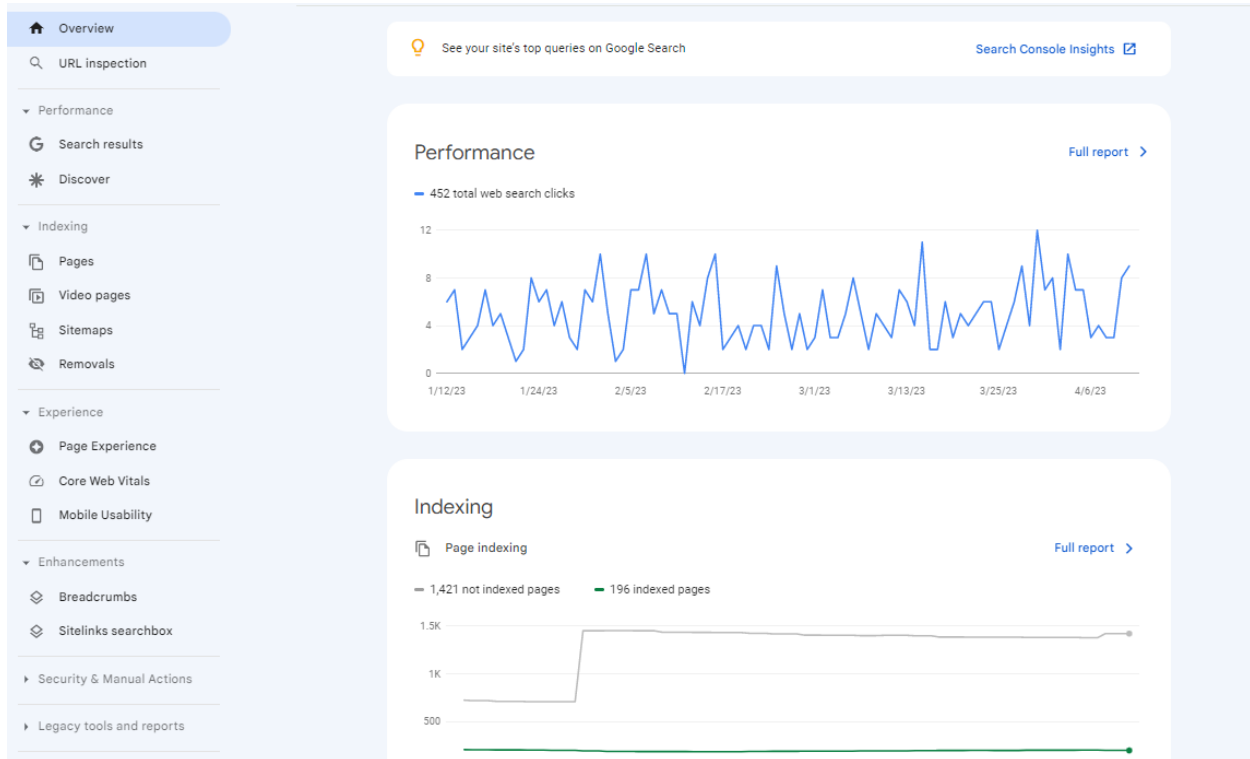
Google Analytics is a free tool from Google. It lets you see how many people visit your site and how they interact with it.



To install it, sign up and paste the supplied tracking code into your website. If you don't know how to do so, find a free word-press plugin or search youtube videos for installation instructions.

5. Setup Google Search Console

[Google Search Console](#) is a powerful, must-have tool for all webmasters. It lets you track your performance in search and see the keywords for which you rank.



It will also keep you in the loop about on-site improvements you can make.

Sidenote. It's also worth signing up for [Bing Webmaster Tools](#)—which is essentially Bing's equivalent of Google Search Console.

6. Check Core Web Vitals

In addition to some basic blocking and tackling, we need to make sure your website meets the minimum performance thresholds that Google has clearly articulated in what they call Core Web Vitals. Measure your performance in each of these areas through the Google Search Console you set up using the before mentioned step:

Largest Contentful Paint (LCP): LCP measures the loading performance of a webpage. It's the time it takes for the largest content element (like an image or text block) to load and be visible on the screen. A good LCP should occur within 2.5 seconds of the page starting to load.

First Input Delay (FID): FID measures the interactivity and responsiveness of a webpage. It's the time it takes for a browser to respond to a user's first interaction (like clicking a link or button). A good FID should be less than 100 milliseconds.

Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS): CLS measures the visual stability of a webpage. It quantifies the amount of unexpected layout shifts that occur while a page is loading. A good CLS score should be less than 0.1.

Keyword Research Checklist

Keyword research is perhaps the most crucial piece of the SEO puzzle. After all, if you don't know what people are searching for, how can you possibly optimize your content for search engines?

Follow these checklist items to get off on the right foot.

1. Find a primary keyword to target

Each page/post on your website should target one main primary keyword. How do you find the right primary keyword to target?

Use tools like [Google Keyword Planner](#) or SEO Tools like, SEMrush, MOZ, or Ahrefs.

2. Find long-tail keyword variations

People search for the same thing in different ways. So much so, that 15% of Google searches are new and have never been searched before. That's why it's important to optimize for long-tail keyword variations.

The easiest way to find such keywords is to use SEO tools like Uber Suggest. Type your primary keyword (e.g., "SEO checklist"), and you'll see long-tail suggestions like so:

<input type="checkbox"/>	KEYWORDS [?]		VOLUME [?]
YOUR KEYWORDS			
<input type="checkbox"/>	seo checklist	Search Results ▾	6,600
KEYWORD IDEAS			
<input type="checkbox"/>	craigslist semo	Search Results ▾	14,800
<input type="checkbox"/>	why is seo important	Search Results ▾	1,600
<input type="checkbox"/>	seo on page checklist	Search Results ▾	880
<input type="checkbox"/>	on page seo checklist	Search Results ▾	880
<input type="checkbox"/>	seo technical checklist	Search Results ▾	590
<input type="checkbox"/>	seo audit checklist	Search Results ▾	480
<input type="checkbox"/>	checklist for seo	Search Results ▾	390
<input type="checkbox"/>	seo checklists	Search Results ▾	320
<input type="checkbox"/>	seo keywords list	Search Results ▾	320
<input type="checkbox"/>	seo list of keywords	Search Results ▾	320
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to choose seo keywords	Search Results ▾	260

3. Understand ‘search difficulty’

How often do you Google something and are unable to find what you were looking for within the first few results? Hardly ever, *right?*

That’s because Google is very good at understanding search intent—i.e., what the user is looking for when they type some words into their search engine.

To have any hope of ranking for a particular keyword, you need to do the same. But you also need to know how difficult it is to rank for a particular keyword. Using tools like UberSuggest, we can assess SEO difficulty.

The top Top 10 search results for “SEO checklist” shows high difficulty. However, some are more challenging to rank for than others. Keep exploring to find a related keyword that has less difficulty. That’s a winning strategy!

KEYWORDS	VOLUME	CPC	PAID DIFFICULTY	SEO DIFFICULTY
YOUR KEYWORDS				
<input type="checkbox"/> seo checklist	6,600	\$4.24	27	68
KEYWORD IDEAS				
<input type="checkbox"/> craigslist semo	14,800	\$0.00	1	76
<input type="checkbox"/> why is seo important	1,600	\$3.18	4	60
<input type="checkbox"/> seo on page checklist	880	\$3.87	12	62
<input type="checkbox"/> on page seo checklist	880	\$3.87	12	62
<input type="checkbox"/> seo technical checklist	590	\$3.76	14	62
<input type="checkbox"/> seo audit checklist	480	\$5.25	20	73
<input type="checkbox"/> checklist for seo	390	\$7.26	3	72
<input type="checkbox"/> seo checklists	320	\$3.92	3	71
<input type="checkbox"/> seo list of keywords	320	\$3.00	19	63

4. Delve deeper into the questions people are *actually* asking

Let’s say that someone Google’s the phrase “SEO checklist.” You can see from analyzing search results there are several related questions. Google uses AI and data from millions of searches to make these suggestions.

But what specific questions do they have? What information should you include in your content? Look at the “More to ask” box in the search results to get some ideas for additional keyword searches

More to ask :

- What is a SEO checklist? ▼
- What are the 5 SEO factors? ▼
- What are the 3 C's of SEO? ▼
- How do I create a SEO checklist? ▼
- What are the 4 main components of an SEO? ▼

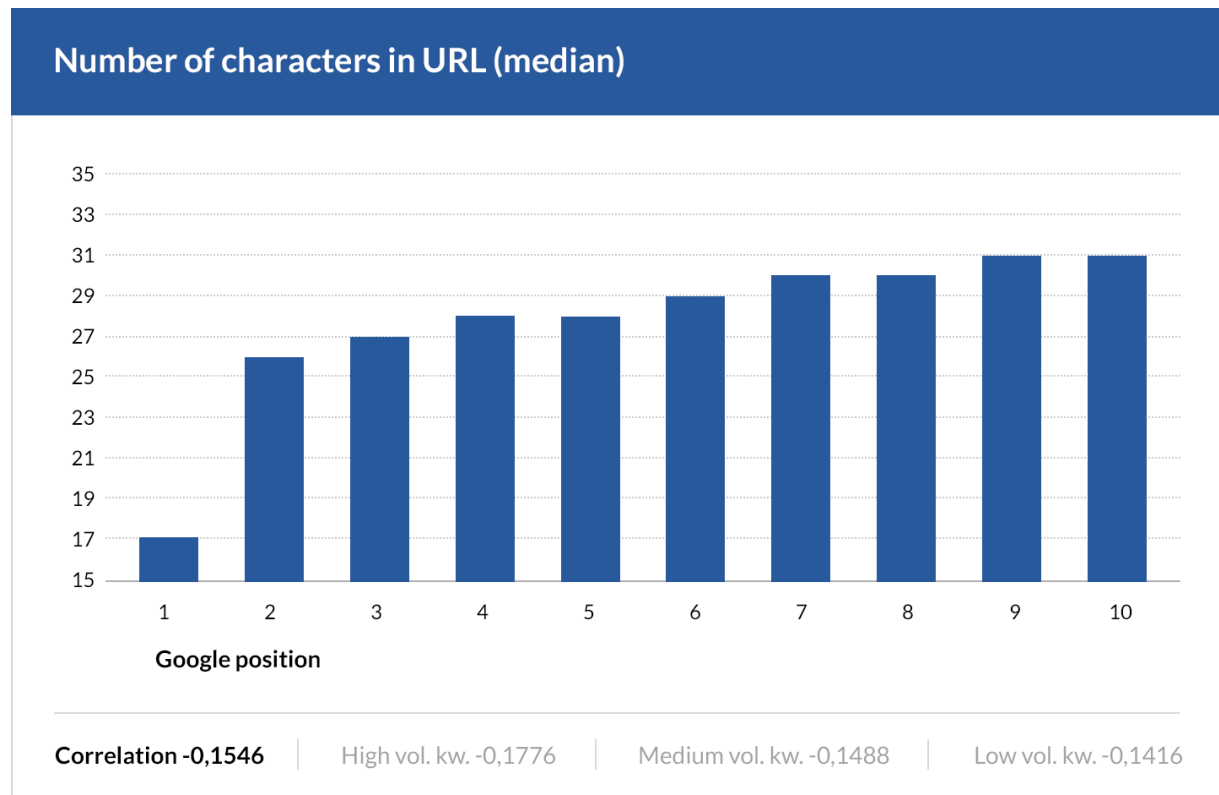
[Feedback](#)

On-Page SEO Checklist

Your next step is to optimize the actual content on your page—i.e., on-page optimization. This is one of the easier aspects of SEO but has a major impact on search results.

1. Use short, descriptive URLs

Pages with shorter URLs rank better—that’s according to a 2019 study of 2 MILLION keywords.



Keep in mind that this is a correlation study. Correlation \neq causation. But don’t sacrifice descriptiveness for length. Your URLs should offer some insight into what the user should expect when they click through to the page.

2. Write a compelling title tag and description

Most people tell you to add your target keyword to your title tag and meta description. Is that bad advice? *Not at all.* It’s good practice.

The same is true for meta descriptions. Your primary goal shouldn't be to force keywords into such places. Instead, work to craft an enticing title and description that will increase CTR and bring more traffic to your website.

3. Use one H1 on your page (and include your keyword in it)

Google recently stated that it's okay to use as many H1 tags on your page as you want. But we think it's still good practice to use just one.

That's because H1's are typically used as a wrapper for the title of the page—and a page can surely only have one title.

Still, there are two important reasons to include your keyword here:

- **Scannability.** Having your keyword in the H1 helps to reinforce that the visitor is in the right place. It makes it clear that your content tackles the topic they likely Googled before arriving on your page.
- **Link framing.** People will often link to your page using the title. Including your keyword in the H1 will increase your chance of receiving links with your target keyword in the anchor text.

4. Link to relevant internal and external resources

If you have to link out, link to authoritative sources. Although there's plenty of evidence that linking out to primary sources isn't all that beneficial, it certainly doesn't hurt. Don't be afraid to link out to other web pages. Just make sure you link to high-quality, relevant stuff.

Internal links are also important. Whenever you publish something new, make an effort to add internal links from relevant places on existing pages.

5. Optimize your images with descriptive "alt" tags

It's estimated that 50% of web page images, on average, don't even have their alt tags filled in. So alt tags aren't particularly important then, right?

Not so fast. Remember that the purpose of alt tags is to offer some context to the reader should the image fail to load (or if the visitor is using a screen reader). For that reason, you

should make sure alt tags are descriptive—this will often result in the natural inclusion of your target keywords. Alt text is also helpful for ranking in Google Images.

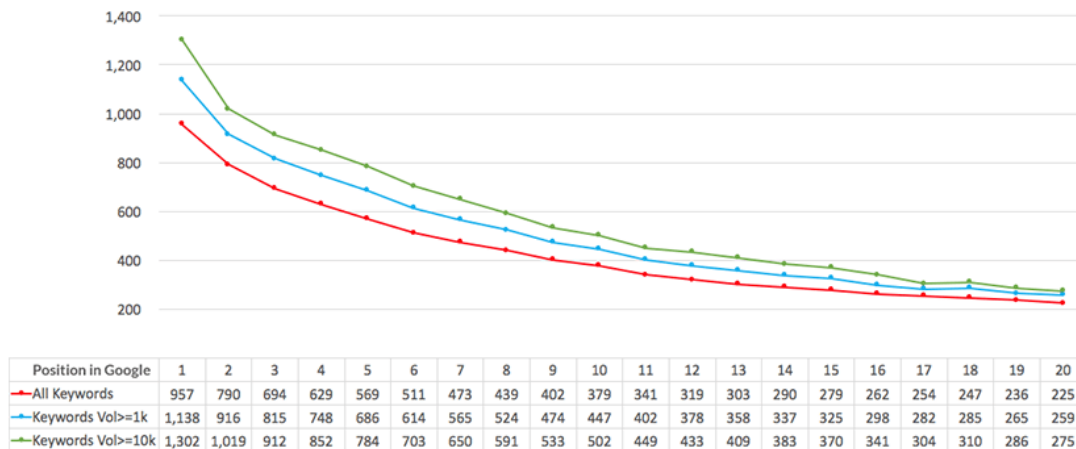
How important is Google Images? Very important. Thanks to mobile and local search, web browsers are consuming more images than ever. And there appears to be a strong correlation between Google My Business profile performance and the number of images available.

Adding alt text only takes a few seconds, it’s well worth doing.

6. Intelligently “sprinkle” long-tail variations throughout your content

Did you know that the average top-ranking page also ranks for almost ~1K other keywords?

The average number of keywords that Top20 ranking pages “also rank for” (in Top10)



This means that most of the time, the bulk of your traffic won’t come from your primary target keyword—it’ll come from long-tail variations.

Optimizing for long-tail variations is easy. Sprinkle them throughout your content wherever they make sense. Just don’t overdo it or shoehorn keywords where they don’t belong—the readability of your content should always take priority.

7. Add schema markup to enhance SERP visibility

Schema markup helps search engines to better understand your content. But it can also dramatically affect how your page is displayed in the SERPs.

Here's a page with schema markup that currently ranks for "pizza dough recipe" and one without:

Basic pizza dough recipe | BBC Good Food

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/basic-pizza-dough> ▼



★★★★★ Rating: 3.4 - 8 votes - 15 mins

20 Jul 2014 - A simple, versatile, Italian-style **dough** that can be chilled or frozen to ... To cook the **pizza**: An outdoor gas barbecue is best for controlling the ...

Basic pizza dough recipe | BBC Good Food

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/basic-pizza-dough> ▼

20 Jul 2014 - **Easy**. Makes 4 pizzas. A simple, versatile, Italian-style **dough** that can ... To cook the **pizza**: An outdoor gas barbecue is best for controlling the ...

Do you see the difference? Schema markup can increase click-through rates and bring more traffic to your website. It's not that technical to implement either. Use [Google's markup helper](#) or [this Schema markup generator](#) to do it with ease.

Content Checklist

Picking a topic with high search traffic potential and doing some basic on-page SEO is important, but all your efforts will be in vain if your content isn't up to scratch.

Follow these quick tips to level-up your content.

1. Write a kick-ass intro

Fail to convince readers that your page offers what they want within a few seconds and they'll hit that back button faster than you can say "dwell time." Your best defense against this is a compelling intro.

Good introductions should do three things:

1. Resonate with the reader;
2. Build trust;
3. Promise a solution to the user's problem.

2. Focus on readability

Nobody wants to read a big wall of text.

That's why you should *always* break up your content with subheadings, images, quotes, etc.— anything that will keep the reader glued to the page.

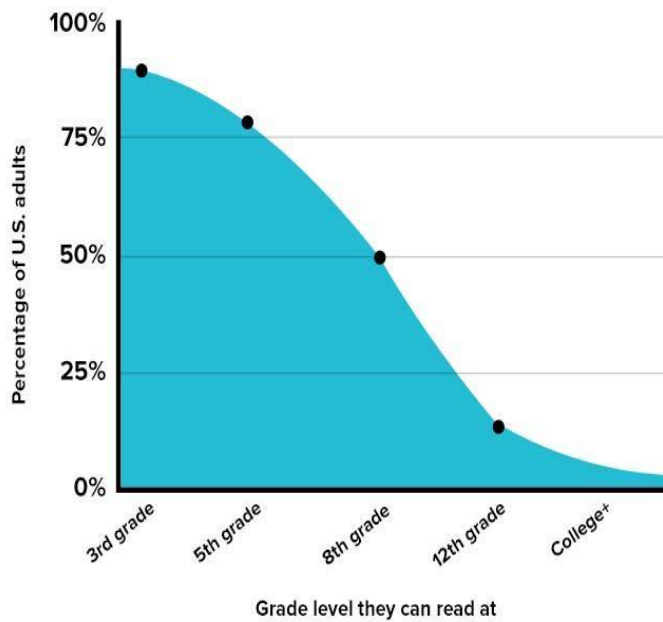
This pulls readers in and gets them engaged right away. If users have to read... burn a lot of calories, they are going to leave your page in a heartbeat. Keep text to a minimum and improve time on page.

3. Use short sentences and paragraphs

50% of the US population read below an 8th-grade reading level. So unless you want to alienate half of the population, don't overcomplicate things.

How well do U.S. adults read?

@shanesnow



That means using short sentences and paragraphs. Also:

- Avoid unnecessary jargon;
- Use simple words instead of complex ones;
- Remove *excruciatingly* unnecessary adverbs.

4. Create the best piece of content on the topic

How do you create the best content on a given subject when it's so subjective? The answer can be summed up with: E-A-T.

Confused? E-A-T stands for Expertise/Authoritativeness/Trustworthiness. That is what Google claims to be looking at in their official [search quality evaluator guidelines](#).

Here's a more in-depth look at the three critical attributes of E-A-T, taken from those same guidelines:

- The **expertise** of the creator of the MC*.
- The **authoritativeness** of the creator of the MC, the MC itself, and the website.
- The **trustworthiness** of the creator of the MC, the MC itself, and the website.

* MC stands for main content.

Technical SEO Checklist

It's not uncommon for technical SEO issues to hold a website back from ranking as high as it should. The problem is that most people think technical SEO is complicated but it doesn't have to be. Here are a few common and easily solvable technical SEO issues you should address for your website.

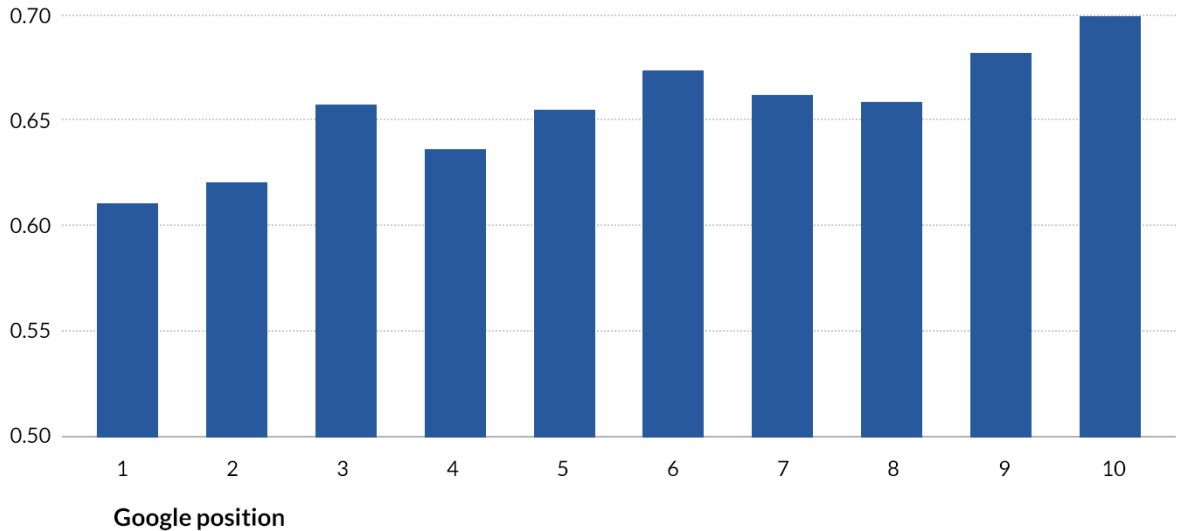
1. Identify and Fix any crawl errors

Crawl errors mean that Google is having trouble viewing the content on your site. If Google can't view it, they won't rank it. It's as simple as that. That's why you should fix such issues as soon as possible. You can find crawl errors using Google's Search Console.

2. Make sure your site loads FAST

Page speed is the talk of the town in the SEO world right now. You can thank the mobile first update for this one. Not only does site speed impact rankings, but it's highly correlated with other factors like user experience ratings and more.

Page load time in seconds (median)



Correlation -0,0283 | High vol. kw. -0,0304 | Medium vol. kw. -0,0397 | Low vol. kw. -0,0161

However, regardless of what the data says, you should still make sure that your site loads fast. You can use [GTMetrix](#) to see how fast your web page loads.

Page speed can be complicated. So as a general rule, I would aim to keep the Fully Loaded Time below 3 seconds.

3. Fix outbound broken links

According to a recent study, ~2% of pages that rank in the top 10 have broken links.

Does this mean that the presence of broken links on a page is a ranking factor? Not exactly. But the fact remains that broken links are bad for user experience. And user experience is something that Google cares deeply about—that's why they adjusted their algorithm to go after sites with too many distracting ads a few years ago.

4. Make sure your site is mobile-friendly

Most searches take place on mobile devices as opposed to desktop. So having a mobile-friendly website is more important than ever. The good news is that if your site is relatively new, and you're using a common web builder like Wordpress, you probably have nothing to worry about.

But it's important to check. Use GTmetrix or the [Google Mobile Speed Test](#) to confirm your site is mobile friendly.

5. Switch to HTTPS

HTTPS is a ranking factor. Google started evaluating sites some time ago with regard to information security and we know it impacts rankings. Potential ranking boosts aside, HTTPS will protect your visitors' data. This is especially important if you have any contact forms on your site. If you're asking for passwords or payment information, then it's not just important, it's an absolute must.

If you need an SSL, your website provider or host should have this feature available. Although it costs a little money to implement, you'll likely won't have top rankings without it.

6. Fix duplicate content issues

Duplicate content occurs when you have two or more similar or identical pages on your website. This can cause problems as Google may not know which of the pages, if any, should rank. Eliminate any duplicate content and make sure your meta data, including titles and meta descriptions, are unique on each and every page.

Link Building Checklist

Link building is perhaps *the* most challenging SEO task. That's because not everything is within your control. You're often reliant on other people giving you links as a result of your outreach efforts. So here are a few tried and tested link building tactics you can use:

1. Replicate your competitor's links

Your competitors' likely have at least some backlinks. Believe it or not, that's a good thing. If a website is linking to your competitor, chances are it'd make sense for them to link to you too.

How? There are many different ways. However, one quick win is to find sites that are linking to multiple competitors as the chance of them also linking to you is high. Look for links that may be easy to replicate, such as those from guest blog posts, link roundups, 'best of' link lists, forums, directories, etc.

2. Monitor and reclaim any lost links



It's also a good idea to monitor links. Links don't stay active forever. As you get more involved with SEO and purchase an SEO tool like Moz, SEMrush, or Ahrefs, you can monitor links on a regular basis.

3. Pursue unlinked mentions

People will sometimes mention your brand—or things related to your brand—without linking back to you. These are known as unlinked mentions.

Now, wouldn't it be cool if you could convert unlinked mentions for your brand to linked mentions? It would, and you can. Just reach out to the authors and request that they "make the text clickable." Because they're already familiar with your brand, there's a high chance that they'll happily make that change for you.

Conclusion

SEO is an ongoing process, and it would be impossible to include *everything* that's important in one checklist. Having said that, if you tackle the checklist items above, you'll be well on your way to higher rankings. You'll also probably be well ahead of your competition. That's all that matters.

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