

Technical SEO Checklist for Local SEO - Template

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This is a technical SEO checklist for local businesses and local SEO projects, for members of the Adam Clarke 2023 Readers Newsletter.

The items on this checklist are the most important items that should be checked at the start of every SEO project.

Add in your own processes, make it your own, and use it in your SEO projects.

Notes:

- Do not make changes on live sites without verifying backups and working on a staging environment. Always have a discussion with your developer before making changes on live sites. If you're not technically inclined, ask your web developer to work through this checklist instead.
- An SEO web crawler, such as Screaming Frog, DeepCrawl, Lumar, Google Search Console or Ahref's Site Audit, is needed for technical areas in this audit, such as checking URL configurations, site errors, meta tags, title tags, alt tags, duplicate pages, canonical tags, and so on.
- Server configuration and server errors will likely require access to the server and server logs, and Google Search Console.

SEO crawlers:

<https://ahrefs.com/website-checker>
<https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider/>
<https://www.lumar.io/>
<https://search.google.com/search-console/about>

	Website structure.	
Site navigation has a clear and logical hierarchy	Verify that the website has a clear and logical structure, with a clear hierarchy and easy-to-use navigation.	✓
Navigation is accessible and crawlable with javascript disabled	The website navigation must exist in the HTML, and implemented as semantic HTML, using unordered or ordered lists, navigation element and ahref tags. It must still display in the code if javascript is disabled. https://www.browseo.net/	✓

	Mobile friendliness	
Passes mobile friendly test	Ensure that the website has a responsive design that is optimized for all devices and screen sizes. Does the website pass the Google Mobile Friendly test? https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly	✓ X
Uses responsive design vs subdomain or dynamic content.	Website uses the most widely supported responsive design approach to mobile	✓ X

	support, compared to mobile subdomains or dynamic content delivered by the server.	
Popups don't obscure the main content.	Check website with a mobile browser and ensure the majority of main content above-the-fold content isn't obscured by ads, on high value SEO pages (low value SEO pages are okay).	✓ X

	On page optimization	
Unique and descriptive meta title and meta description tags used across the website.	Check that all pages have unique and descriptive title tags and meta descriptions that include relevant keywords.	✓ X
No empty or duplicate meta title and meta description tags	Check that the website does not have large amounts of meta title or meta description tags missing and doesn't use duplicated meta title and meta description tags.	✓ X
Logical and semantic H1 heading structure used across the content.	Verify that all pages have a clear and logical heading structure, using H1, H2, and H3 tags as appropriate. Use an SEO crawler to check that all pages use the correct heading tags.	✓ X
Images have alt tags	Ensure that all images have alt tags that accurately describe the content of the image and include relevant keywords. Use an alt tag checker to verify that all images have properly implemented alt tags.	✓ X
Keywords have been optimised into high value pages.	Ensure that all pages have relevant and high-quality content that includes relevant keywords. Use a keyword research tool to identify the best keywords for your pages, and then use them in your content.	✓ X
Check internal anchor text.	Check that all internal links on the site use descriptive and relevant anchor text. Check that there's a natural variance used in the anchor text and is not over optimized.	✓ X
Social sharing used.	Verify that high value SEO pages have social media sharing buttons in place to encourage engagement and sharing, to encourage social signals.	✓ X
Hreflang implementation is correct.	Check that the website has a proper hreflang implementation in place to ensure that the correct version of the website is served to users based on their language and region, or set to the target audience at least.	✓ X
Privacy policy and terms of service are included.	Verify that the website has a proper and up-to-date privacy policy and terms and conditions pages (to improve trust factors with Google). Check that it's been updated in the past 2-5 years.	✓ X
Site passes Core Web Vitals and loads under <2s	Make sure that the website loads quickly and efficiently, with optimized images and code. Test the website's loading time using website speed test tools such as Google PageSpeed Insights or Pingdom Website Speed Test.	✓ X

Schema markup has been implemented	Check that the website has schema markup in place to help search engines understand the content on the site. https://technicalseo.com/tools/schema-markup-generator/	✓X
Schema markup validates with Google's Rich Results test	Use Google's Structured Data Testing Tool to check if schema is implemented correctly. https://search.google.com/test/rich-results	✓X
Code passes W3 validator without errors.	Website passes web standards validator without errors. Check this using the W3 Markup Validation Service. (note: some SEO's don't follow this and others swear by it, I'm one who swears by it. We don't know exactly what vulnerabilities Google's AI SpamBrain spider looks for, but the first place to look is Javascript errors and vulnerabilities).	✓X

	Local SEO	
NAP exists on website.	Check that the website includes NAP (Name, Address, Phone number) information on every page, and that it is consistent across the site. Check for consistency in NAP information.	✓X
Business listed on Google My Business.	Ensure that the business is listed on Google My Business.	✓X
Location based keywords used throughout the site.	Verify that the website includes relevant location-based keywords throughout the site, including in the title tags and meta descriptions. Use a keyword research tool to identify the best location-based keywords for your site, such as Ahrefs, Moz, Semrush, Keyword tool, and so on.	✓X
Google Maps used on contact page.	Ensure that the website has a Google Map embedded on the contact page, with the correct location marker. Use Google Maps to create an embedded map and place it on the contact page.	✓X
Contact form has conversion tracking setup.	Ensure that the website includes a contact form, with all necessary fields and validation, and conversion tracking is setup, so that local SEO results can be monitored and tracked. Embed contact form on contact page, homepage and targeted SEO pages for higher conversions.	✓X
Structured data implemented with local business schema.	Ensure that the website has a proper structured data implementation for local businesses, such as local business schema, on the contact page or about page at the least.	✓X

	Content Optimization	
Website has a blog.	Verify that the website includes a blog and that it is regularly updated with fresh and relevant content. Use a content calendar to plan and schedule regular blog posts.	✓X
Blog posts are optimized.	Ensure that all blog posts are optimized for SEO, with relevant keywords, meta tags, and images.	✓X
Keywords used in blog posts.	Use a keyword research tool to identify the best keywords for your blog posts and include them in the title, meta description, and throughout the content. Use internal links in blog posts to high value SEO pages.	✓X
Check pagination and category pages aren't indexed.	Pagination, category, tag and archive pages, on blogs as example, aren't being indexed. Duplicate meta tags on these pages however are generally okay and expected.	✓X
Don't index URLs with filters or alternative sort orders in the URL.	Check that URLs for search results with filters and sort orders in the URL aren't being index. This can be done with a noindex robots meta tag or discouraging crawling URLs in the robots.txt	✓X

	Server Configuration and Server Errors.	
404 errors have been cleared.	Ensure that all 404 errors have been cleared and that pages redirect to the correct location.	✓X
302 redirects not used and 301 redirects are used as the main method of redirects (e.g. not javascript or rewrites)	Verify that 302 redirects have not been used, and that all redirects are implemented as 301 redirects.	✓X
Server in the same geographic location as the target market.	Check that the server IP is located in the same geographic location as the target audience. Or a CDN is configured with a mirror in the same location as the target audience. Example, if your business is in New York, you should have some sort of server configured in New York and not San Francisco, and Google should see this when it visits your site.	✓X
HTTPS is used and HTTPS is set as the canonical URL.	Verify that the website is being served over a secure connection (HTTPS) and that all pages are properly secured. Check the SSL certificate validates without errors. And check the HTTPS version of the URL is set as the canonical URL in both HTTPS and HTTP URLs.	✓X
Code is minified and compressed.	Ensure that all server-side code is optimized for performance and that all files are properly minified and compressed.	✓X
No errors with redirects or rewrites.	Verify that all server-side redirects and URL rewrites are properly implemented, without causing server errors. Look at the server errors in Google Search Console or similar web crawler to find this.	✓X

404 page exists and contains links to high value pages.	Verify that the website has a proper and clear 404 error page with a customized message and links to other pages on the website.	✓X
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	URL configuration.	
Uses www subdomain.	Verify that the website is properly configured for the standard www subdomain and not the non-standard non-www subdomain. And ensure the site is accessible only through the one subdomain.	✓X
SEO friendly URL's used.	Ensure that SEO-friendly URLs are used, and not query parameter URLs.	✓X
Logical hierarchy used in URL slugs.	Check that the website has proper URL structure, with clear hierarchies and logical organization, and doesn't run too deep. E.g. no more than 1 or 2 parent categories used in URL slugs.	✓X
Multiple URLs not used to access singular content.	Check that URLs are not used to access or deliver the same content, which can cause duplicate content penalties or confusion with spiders.	✓X

	Web analytics.	
Google Analytics 4 is installed and collecting data.	Ensure that Google Analytics 4 code is used in the site code, properly configured and tracking all pages.	✓X
Conversion tracking, event tracking and goal tracking setup.	Verify that all important website events are being tracked, such as form submissions, button clicks, and page views.	✓X
Check Google Analytics response time.	Check the response time of the Google Analytics tracking code. If long, then host locally with a plugin like CAOS on WordPress.	✓X

	Indexing and Crawling	
Robots.txt and sitemap.xml in standard locations	Verify that the robots.txt file and XML sitemap in place in the standard locations. Robots.txt and sitemap.xml file should be located at the following location https://www.yourwebsite.com/robots.txt , https://www.yourwebsite.com/sitemap.xml	✓X
Sitemap is referenced in robots.txt	Verify that the robots.txt references the correct location of the sitemap.xml file.	✓X
Robots.txt isn't blocking content that should be indexed.	Check robots.txt isn't blocking content that should be indexed by Google. Google Search Console> Index > Coverage > Submitted URL blocked by robots.txt	✓X
Sitemap is updated and has all of the content.	Verify that the sitemap file has been updated recently, and references all of the pages in the website that need indexing.	✓X

Sitemap doesn't point to pages that should be excluded.	Check sitemap doesn't point to URLs that should be protected or excluded from search engine indexing, such as 404 pages or CMS admin pages.	✓X
Google Search Console has no errors or issues.	Use Google Search Console to monitor your website's performance and identify any issues that may be preventing proper indexing and crawling.	✓X
Site is indexed in Google.	Check that your website is indexed by Google. Use the site: operator in Google search to check if your website is indexed by Google.	✓X
Canonicalization in place correctly.	Ensure that the website has proper canonicalization in place to avoid duplicate content issues. Check the site's source code to ensure that all pages use the rel=canonical tag where appropriate.	✓X
Sitemap has been submitted to Google.	Ensure that your sitemap is submitted to Google Search Console and that there are no errors present.	✓X

Have suggestions? I'd love to hear them. Email me at adam@simpleeffectiveness.com.