

26-Point SEO Checklist for New Websites & SEO Audits




This SEO checklist outlines the **most important things** you should do when starting a new website or performing an SEO Audit.

It covers technical SEO, Keyword Research, On-Page SEO, Link Building and More. Follow these **26 SEO best practices** to increase *long-term targeted traffic* to your website.

Bonus: [Download a PDF version of this SEO Checklist](#). Access it offline anytime. Bring it to team or client meetings!

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the course 😊



TECHNICAL SEO CHECKLIST

1. **Install [Google Analytics](#)**. Essential to measure key SEO metrics like website traffic, conversions and revenue. Use [Ahrefs](#) to measure keyword ranking and link building (alternatives: [OpensiteExplorer](#), [MajesticSEO](#), [Semrush](#))
2. **Using WordPress?** Download the [Yoast SEO Plugin](#). It will make your life 10x easier. Use it to complete many of the Technical and On-Page SEO best practices in one place.
3. **Verify Your Site in [Google Search Console](#)**. This free tool allows you to check how the search engines view your site with reports about indexing status, search queries, crawl errors and penalties. To learn more, [read this helpful guide](#).
4. **Improve Website Performance & Speed**. Analyze your site with [Google PageSpeed Insights](#). Aim to score 80+. Speed things up with the free WordPress Plugins: [Better Delete Revision](#), [WP Smush](#) and [W3 Total Cache](#) [alternative: [WP Super Cache](#)].
5. **Take the [Google Mobile-Friendly Test](#)**. Your site should deliver a great user experience across all devices. Extra important now that [Google's algorithm favours mobile friendly sites](#).

KEYWORD RESEARCH PROCESS

6. **Develop a Buyer Persona**: Getting into your customers shoes is the first step to keyword research. Remember, customers are *not* searching for your site. They are searching for valuable information to solve their problems. Having a [buyer persona](#) is a crucial first step to figuring out what your *best customers* are typing into Google.
7. **Keyword Strategy**. Aim to target less competitive “[body and long tail keywords](#)” that competitors have overlooked. Create content around a portfolio of keywords rather than one single term.
8. **Brainstorm for Keyword Ideas**. Make a copy of this [Keyword Research Template](#). Hack [Wikipedia](#) for Topic Ideas and Synonyms. Generate 1000's of

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long tail keywords ideas using 3 automated tools: [Google Autocomplete](#), [Ubersuggest](#) & [Keyword Shitter](#) [all free]. Discover untapped keywords and topics using [Quora](#).

9. **Narrow Down Your Keyword List:** Use search volume data from [Keyword Everywhere Extension](#) or [Google Keyword Planner](#) to cut down the list. Be sure to consider commercial intent using Cost-per-click (CPC) figures as a guide.
10. **Choose Target Keywords:** Once you have a list of possible keywords & phrases, start by reviewing the first page of Google for each keyword. Look to see if there are well established sites with high quality content. Then, use data from the [MOZ SEO Toolbar](#) to see the authority and number of links competitors have. Eliminate overly competitive keywords and focus on keywords you actually have a chance to rank for. Your chosen keywords will be the centerpieces of your content.

ON-PAGE SEO CHECKLIST

11. **Pick One Keyword Per Page.** You'll generally want to start with lower-volume keywords.
12. **Write Title Tags Search Engines Love.** Every page of your website should have unique title tag, preferably starting with a relevant keyword. Include modifiers like "best", "2016" etc. to stand out and to pick up long tail searches. Keep title tags 55 characters or less or they'll appear truncated in search results.
13. **Follow Best Practices for URL's.** Use short and sweet URLs that include your target keyword. e.g. [www.yourdomain.com/target-keyword](#). Avoid numbered urls like [www.yourdomain.com/p=123](#). Always-use-hyphens-in-urls. Never_use_underscores_in_urls.
14. **Skyrocket Clickthrough Rate with Meta Descriptions.** Highlight the benefit of your post or product compared to competitors who already appear in the search results. Keep meta descriptions 160 characters or less or they'll appear truncated in search results.

15. **Optimize for the Google Image Search Results.** Create with [Canva](#). Include target keyword in the filename and add keyword-rich alt text to images when uploading.
16. **Reduce Bounce Rates.** Make the topic clear by including your target keyword in the first 100 words of your article.
17. **Give Your SEO a Boost with Heading Tags:** Include your keyword once in an H2 or H3 subheading.
18. **Include Outbound Links.** At least 2 outbound links to authority sites (popular blogs, news sites and .edu and .gov resources) in every piece of content that you publish.
19. **Add Internal links.** 2-3 internal links to older articles when you publish a new one.
20. **Publish Longer Content.** At least 300 words. 1500 words for competitive keywords.
21. **Use Prominent Social Sharing Buttons.** Make sure your social sharing buttons are front and centre on blog posts and articles. Use [DiggDigg](#) WordPress plugin.
22. **Double-check everything.** Once you're live with an [SEO Audit Tool](#).

LINK BUILDING

23. **Link Building Strategy.** Not all backlinks are created equal. Your goal should be to earn quality “do follow” back links from high ranking pages in your niche. Earn these naturally by creating (and promoting!) content worth linking to.
24. **Analyze Your Competitor's Backlinks, Rankings & Traffic.** This is the easiest way to get started with link building. Look at each of Top 10 search results for your target keyword, views link for each page using the [MOZ SEO Toolbar](#). Focus on their “Inbound Links” from “Only External” sources to see who has linked to them. You can also use [Ahrefs](#), [Majestic SEO](#) & [SimilarWeb](#) to uncover competitors marketing strategies you can replicate.
25. **Maximise Links for Your SEO Campaigns.** Find authoritative links in the tools above and reach out

to those sources to pitch your latest blog post or product. Expect 5% response rate from these cold emails. You can also search for existing non-linked content using [Mention](#) or [Buzzsumo](#). Contact the owner or author of the piece and ask them to kindly link back to you if possible.

26. Create Content That Generates Links & Social Shares on Autopilot

- *Model Successful Content.* Use [Buzzsumo](#) to find proven content ideas & formats.
- *Put Together Best of Lists.* e.g. [Top 10 Lists](#)
- *Crowdsource Content.* e.g. [7 Experts On Why Building Your Email is So Important](#)
- *Publish Survey Results.* e.g. [SEO Pricing: 600+ Agencies Share Costs & Pricing Model](#)
- *Create Infographics.* e.g. [Noob Guide to Online Marketing](#). Tools: [Piktochart](#), [Infogram](#), [Canva](#).

Bonus Tip #1: Leverage the high domain authority of other websites to quickly get to the top of the search results: Guest Posting, YouTube, Slideshare, Udemy, Quora & more. Publish your content on these sites and drive traffic back to your website.

Bonus Tip #2: Local SEO. If you have a business with a physical location check out these [additional tips](#) to bring your local business to the top of the search results.

NEXT STEPS...

Increase your search engine traffic by following the steps outlined above. Ask questions & get feedback on your work inside the [course](#).

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39 Comments



JON Gergeceff

Extremely comprehensive list . I've been interested in the art and science of S.E.O. For a few years . I wish I had known about your online class when I started. Thanks for the great list and your trainings . Warm regards ,
Jon
St Louis , Mo . USA



Daragh Walsh

Fantastic Jon! That's a great compliment. Delighted to hear you found the SEO checklist helpful too :)

Pingback: [SEO Checklist for New Websites & SEO Audits \[2016\] | Digital Marketing Reviews - Apps & SAAS](#)



Mike

Yes as Jon said "Extremely comprehensive list", I will definitely go over all points in this list, thanks a million!!



Daragh Walsh

Really appreciate the positive feedback Mike. Thanks for commenting!

Aggu



Great course and awesome checklist, thanks! What keyword strategy would you recommend for the front page of a site... picking the 3 most important ones? (besides also targeting each keyword on separate pages)...most backlinks will probably lead to the front page? Thanks again!



Daragh Walsh

Hi Aggu, I recommend one keyword per page. People may link to your front page to reference with a reference to your business name so best to pick a keyword in the title tag which best describes your business. However, most backlinks will come from separate pages where people reference useful content you've produced which may help their audience. e.g. seo checklist for new sites. Hope this helps!



Web able

May I ask:

For something like a services page, what kind of keyword should I target if I'm in a highly competitive field? Specifically Web Design & Development.

Also, what if my landing page needs to state that I do a lot of services, ie. Logo design as well as web design.

Should I use the landing page for my brand and have separate service pages targeting their relevant keyword? or what would you suggest?

[EDIT] Sorry, one more thing: Is there anything I should be concerned about that can negatively affect my SEO. eg. I read

somewhere that spam can be a problem?
how would one stop this from happening?
p.s Really enjoying your course so far!
Extremely informative and well
explained.



Daragh Walsh

See answers below Web able:

1. “Web Design” will be a very competitive keyword so you should narrow your focus to target your audience. e.g. “web design london”. See keyword research lectures for more.
 2. Yes, focus on one keyword per page. Your home page title tag for example could be “Webable.com – Web Design London, England”.
 3. Yes, you’ll want to remove spam traffic if it starts to show in Google Analytics. See lecture 165 for more.
- Hope this helps!
Daragh



Web able

Wow man, just wow... I’m a complete noob to SEO, but man after this checklist... GREAT JOB!!! Going to recommend this course to everyone!



Daragh Walsh

Great to hear Web able!



msawyer80

This is amazing, it has answered a lot of my questions. Thank you

Stacey Jones

This post is really amazing and has lots of influences. The point mentioned above in the On-page checklist will help me a lot. What to do if we have installed the diggdigg plugin and also want to show the twitter feed. Is showing the [twitter feed](#) on the home is really worth it or not.



Kapil Yadav

Hello Daragh,

I am loving your lectures. They are so helpful to understand how everything works. I have made my new website, [writingbeans.com](#), to help students with Study help and Assignment helps. I have made this just with your instructions and still working on it. Amazing experience for a person with Hospitality Industry background.

Thanks



Daragh Walsh

Great to hear your positive feedback. Keep up the great work!



Timm McLagan

Daragh, I LOVE the course so far. I went to the Digg Digg plugin link you suggested in your SEO Checklist section, but it looks like the plugin no longer exists. What plugin do you use for your site currently?



Daragh Walsh

Share buttons are built into my theme from [mythemeshop.com](#). Best to search online for “free floating share button” to see the latest!



Timm McLagan
Ok Thanks!



disqus_1rJsMu5JF0

My website doesn't show up at all when I search for it with Google. I suspect a fundamental problem. Ideas?



Daragh Walsh

It will take 3-4 days for a new site to appear in Google. Check your google search console if not – see course lecture on this.



Petru Vizitiu

Dear Daragh,

I really enjoy you "Complete Digital Marketing Course 2017, that I've found very useful and helpful to improve my website <https://7culori.com>. I want to express my gratitude for your advices that brought a real upgrade to all my knowledge and helped me to become more skilled in terms of SEO, Online Marketing, Google Analytics, WordPress and many-many more.

Like the french are saying: Chapeau, Daragh!



Daragh Walsh

Site looks great. Well done Petru!



Zia ul haq Abdul Azeez

Hey Daragh, I have been doing your complete digital marketing course since while now. So far I found it really great and extremely helpful in optimizing my

travel website <https://dubaivisahq.com>
step by step though the industry is heavily
bombarded with competitors. So yes,
YouTube marketing is my next target in
the course as you suggested. I am focusing
much on SEO. Thanks a ton!



Daragh Walsh

Keep up the great work Zia!



Tiago Corrêa de Almeida

Hello Daragh! Curiously! What is the SEO
Audit Tool embedded into your blog?



Daragh Walsh

mysiteauditor.com



Sean O'Hara

Hey Daragh,
Been a while but I need a tip on how to
keep google analytics from tracking my
computers in my office. How would I go
about doing that?
Thanks!



Daragh Walsh

You can filter your visits from
the reports – see lecture 150 in
the course for a step by step



Bockarie Sama Banya

This course has opened my eyes to a lot of
things. I paid \$400 for a similar course but
my oh my what i have benefitted from
your course is immeasurable and gives
credence to the saying that “expensive is
not always quality”. Keep it up man.



Daragh Walsh

Thanks for sharing your positive feedback!



sandeep kafle

Hey Daragh,
this course boosted me much more and the question is i take over this website <http://nepaltrailblazer.com/> seo from someone. do you have any kind of seo checklist for old or already built websites how to start from the scratch?



Daragh Walsh

Use same checklist above!



Monica Hunter

this checklist is wonderful. I'm going to share it in a presentation tomorrow and you can be sure I'll tell people to follow you!



Daragh Walsh

Please do Monica!



neel_t

Hi Daragh,
Love this course of yours! I had question if your could help me out- I recently started a blog related to photography where I intend to post on topics like tips & tricks, how to's and also photos which I have take. Now I can optimise the other topic posts(eg. 6 beginner mistakes in photography, how to choose a camera etc.) thanks to your list above but how do I do

the same for posts where I talk about my own photos & the experience of it? How would the keyword research be?

Thanks



Daragh Walsh

Just use your photos in the “how to” examples – don’t have it separate



Mathieu Gervois

Hi Daragh,
First of all, thank you very much for your course, it’s great! I’m at point the 4th point of the list and I am wondering why would you want to delete the plugins Akismet and Jetpack? Thanks!



Daragh Walsh

you should delete any plugins you don’t need as they slow down your site!



Mathieu Gervois

Yeah I understand that but I had heard good reviews about these 2 plugins, aren’t they useful?



Amit Singh

hi ,
1- I want to activate rich snippet for my website but unable to do that . (I did not found any link or lecture/video related to rich snippet , I want to show my reviews in google search)
2- also I want to get top rank for my site but didn’t success.

